

SOCIO-POLITICAL REFLECTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE  
OTTOMAN ARMENIANS AFTER THE 1908 REVOLUTION:  
BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR

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2014

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OTTOMAN ARMENIANS AFTER THE 1908 REVOLUTION:  
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Thesis submitted to the  
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
History

by  
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Boğaziçi University

2014

Socio-Political Reflections and Expectations of the Ottoman Armenians after the  
1908 Revolution: Between Hope and Despair

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February 2014

## Thesis Abstract

Ohannes Kılıçdağı, “Socio-Political Reflections and Expectations of the Ottoman Armenians after the 1908 Revolution: Between Hope and Despair”

This thesis aims to shed light on perceptions and evaluation of the Ottoman Armenians in the second constitutional period about their relations with the state and the other groups and also about the changes in the state apparatus in making the constitutional government. Besides, it explores the internal relations between different segments of the Armenian community. By doing so, it tries to widen the perspective of the historiography of the second constitutional period in which non-Muslims are rarely handled as autonomous subjects.

In the thesis, those Armenians’ societal relations are analyzed under the categories of internal and external. Internal relations mean the relations among Armenian institutions, parties, and social classes. External relations, on the other hand, are analytically divided into two as vertical and horizontal relations where the former denotes the relations with the state and the latter the relations with non-Armenian ethno-religious communities, i.e. Turks, Kurds.

In order to understand Ottoman Armenians’ subjectivity this work largely utilizes the texts, i.e. newspaper articles, books, and booklets which they produced, and which are expected to reflect their mentality. The larger portion of the material are the Armenian newspapers published in Anatolian cities such as Sivas, Tokat, Erzurum, Trabzon, Harput, Adapazarı, and Izmir which constitutes a representative sample of the Anatolian Armenians who constituted the vast majority of the Ottoman Armenians.

On the basis of all primary resources it can be concluded that the Ottoman Armenians were living in a continuous ebb and flow of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism just before the catastrophe of the First World War.

## Tez Özeti

Ohannes Kılıçdağı, “1908 Devrimi Sonrasında Osmanlı Ermenilerinin Sosyo-Politik Düşünce ve Beklentileri: Umut ve Umutsuzluk Arasında

Bu tez 1908 devrimi sonrasında Osmanlı Ermenilerinin devletle, diğer gruplarla ve kendi içlerindeki ilişkiler, anayasal bir devlet aygıtı yaratma sürecinde yapılan değişiklikler ve bu değişikliklerin uygulanması hakkındaki düşünce ve değerlendirmelerine ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunu yaparken gayrimüslimlerin otonom özneler olarak pek ele alınmadığı İkinci Meşrutiyet dönemi tarih yazımındaki perspektifi bu yönde genişletmeye çalışmaktadır.

Tezde bahsi geçen Ermenilerin toplumsal ilişkileri iç ve dış olarak iki kategori altında analiz edilmektedir. İç ilişkilerden kasıt Ermeni kurumları, siyasi partileri ve toplumsal sınıflar arasındaki ilişkilerdir. Dış ilişkiler ise analitik olarak yatay ve dikey ilişkiler olarak incelenmektedir. Burada dikey devletle olan ilişkileri, yatay ise Ermeniler dışında kalan, Türkler ve Kürtler gibi dini ve etnik gruplarla olan ilişkileri ifade etmektedir.

Osmanlı Ermenilerinin öznel düşüncelerini anlamak için bu çalışmada onların zihniyet dünyasını yansıttığı düşüncesiyle ürettikleri gazete makaleleri, kitaplar ve kitapçıklar gibi metinlerden yararlanılmıştır. Bu malzemenin büyük bir bölümünü Osmanlı Ermenilerinin çoğunluğunu oluşturan Anadolu Ermenilerinin yaşadığı Sivas, Tokat, Erzurum, Trabzon, Harput, Adapazarı ve İzmir gibi şehirlerde yayınlanmış Ermenice gazeler oluşturmaktadır.

Yararlanılan birincil kaynaklara dayanarak Birinci Dünya Savaşı felaketi öncesinde Osmanlı Ermenilerinin bitmek bilmeyen bir umut ve umutsuzluk, iyimserlik ve kötümserlik gelgiti içinde yaşamakta oldukları söylenebilir.

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CHAPTER I:  
INTRODUCTION: FROM DIFFERENTIATED SUBJECTS TO  
EQUAL CITIZENS

The long nineteenth century of the Ottoman Empire can be read as a period in which the state tried to revise its relations with non-Muslim communities of the country. Redefinition of these relations in harmony with up-to-dated political-moral standards to cope with the ethno-religious differences was always an inseparable part of the Ottoman reformation because old ways of governing different communities became obsolete. New expectations and demands of the Christians in their treatment by the state was one of the important reasons of this obsolescence. Many official-legal documents of the nineteenth century, which were cornerstones in the modernization of the Empire, were also an effort to establish this relation on new principles, namely 1839 *Tanzimat* Edict, 1856 Reform Edict, 1869 Citizenship Law (*Tabiyet-i Osmaniye Kanunu*), 1876 Constitution.

Treatment of the non-Muslims

From the very beginning, the Ottoman state treated non-Muslims according to the Islamic principles which accept non-Muslims as dhimma which means that in the exchange of surrendering to the Islamic forces without fighting and recognition of Islamic domination, non-Muslims got protection of their life and property. As long as they continued paying a special tax (*cizye*) this contract would be valid; and

accordingly they could practice their religion and tradition *relatively* freely.

Obviously, this was not a relation based on equality between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Some even claim that humiliation was a part of being dhimma.<sup>1</sup>

The Ottoman Empire, adopting this approach of the Islamic law, constructed the *millet* system to deal with her non-Muslim people. There are disagreements in the literature at some issues such as when and how this system was implemented, what was the degree of the institutionalization of the system, what were the boundaries of the authority of communal leaders. Some claim that this system was established with all its rules and regulations just after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 by Mehmed II whereas others, objecting this view, contend that it was shaped in time and became institutionalized in the eighteenth century. Also, according to some scholars communities had autonomy in their civil affairs but others do not accept this thesis and say that their autonomy was restricted with church affairs such as the appointment of clergy to certain posts.<sup>2</sup> However, without denying the significance of these discussions, two principles of the system were more important for the purposes of this dissertation. The first was the treatment of the non-Muslims in a hierarchy in which they were theoretically and practically inferior in social life compared to the Muslims. Many practices of daily life reflected this principle although their scope and intensity had changed according to the conjuncture. For

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<sup>1</sup> C. E. Bosworth, "The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 42.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of such different views see Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*, Millet Sistemi (Aksaray, İstanbul: Klasik, 2004), 34–56. For a questioning of *millet* system see Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 69–88. For a discussion of when the millet system was established through the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople see Kevork B. Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982).

example, even though one may find contrary cases, at least legalistically they were not allowed to build new churches after a place was conquered by the Ottoman Islamic forces; and they could renew the church buildings by permission but without enlarging or raising them more than the original. Moreover, the churches that disturbed the Muslims by their “noise” might have been demolished. It was also forbidden to perform symbolic actions of Christianity such as ringing bells, presenting the cross in the public space. Instead of iron bells, they were allowed to use hollow pieces of wood.<sup>3</sup> There were also some descriptive rules regulating what kind of garments the non-Muslims could use. Every religious group was allocated certain material and color to use for their clothes and shoes. It was punishable if a non-Muslim wore like Muslim and pretended to be Muslim in public space.<sup>4</sup> These examples can be easily multiplied but the common point of all was to keep the non-Muslims subordinate and second class. However, one thing should be underlined: these practices reflect the general ideology or mentality of the state which does not necessarily mean that they had been implemented strictly through the centuries. Daniel Goffman claims a similar opinion as he says that although the Ottoman state conceptualized the society in communal terms it might have been so flexible in practice from time to time that one can even question the stability and consistency of the millet system.<sup>5</sup>

The second precept of the system was the employment of the religious communal leaders, namely patriarchs, metropolitan bishops and rabbis, as mediators between the state and the non-Muslim communities. They were to relay state orders

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<sup>3</sup> For details of these practices see Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi*, 289, 291, 292, 312.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 344, 345.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Goffman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (Fall 1994): 138.

to their coreligionists and also the demands from below to the state. They were responsible for keeping order in their community. Additionally, the state expected them to provide intelligence about the groups and activities in their communities that might have been risky for the security of the state.<sup>6</sup>

One of their routine and maybe the most important duties was to collect taxes. More specifically, every religious leader was appointed in the exchange of a sum called *pişkeş/peşkes*. This was a prerequisite of using their authorities on their communities. They could not get the office and start their duty unless they paid this sum. In addition to *pişkeş/peşkes*, every patriarch had to pay to the state an annual tax (*mir-i rüsum*). The religious leaders collected these amounts from their flock and transferred to the state. Macit Kenanoğlu, relying on this information, questions both the description of this system as an autonomous *millet* system and claims that it would be more appropriate to qualify the manner of governing non-Muslims as religious or spiritual *iltizam* and communal leaders as *mültezims*.<sup>7</sup> Before Kenanoğlu, Halil İnalçık also stated this same thesis when he explores the status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

In a sense, the religious leaders worked like high bureaucrats of the state. Surely, they were accountable to the state authorities in their deeds and accordingly could be dismissed by the sultan<sup>9</sup> but they also had a considerable disciplining power in their community, whose boundaries and effectiveness might have changed in time. What is a telling point that gives some clues to understand the logic of the system is

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<sup>6</sup> Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi*, 175–177.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 60–66.

<sup>8</sup> Halil İnalçık, “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Under the Ottomans,” in *Essays in Ottoman History* (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1998), 195–223.

<sup>9</sup> Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi*, 172.

that the authority of a patriarch on an individual from his flock would terminate if that individual converted to Islam.<sup>10</sup> This means that the Ottoman state treated non-Muslim subjects not like independent individuals with distinct existence but a part of a collectivity. The communities were held collectively responsible for their duties to the state. Another action of the state that demonstrates this understanding was taking the prominent religious figures such as metropolitan bishops hostage to assure the obedience of the non-Muslims. Those who were in custody were changed by regular intervals.<sup>11</sup>

### Defection of the System and the Efforts to Fix

The system started to become defective in the nineteenth century mainly because of two related reasons. Firstly, since the non-Muslim communities of the Empire became familiar with the Western thought of the Enlightenment, which promoted equality (at least among the white male citizens), and emancipation at both national and individual level, they did not consent any more to be inferior to the Muslims, neither ideologically nor practically. In other words, they started to demand social and political equality, which could have not been provided by traditional *millet* system. Secondly, the absolute authority of religious leaders within their own communities started to be questioned by new elites who were under the influence of again the European trends such as individualization and secularization. So, a power struggle started among the elites of the communities as a result of which the

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<sup>10</sup> For the details of the conversion issue in the nineteenth century see Selim Deringil, “‘There Is No Compulsion in Religion’: On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839-1856,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 3 (2000): 547–575.

<sup>11</sup> Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi*, 182.

influence of religious leaders on their flock remarkably decreased. This was also detrimental for the *millet* system since internal ineffectiveness of the communal leaders would risk their intermediary role between the state and their community, which was the main logic of the *millet* system as mentioned above.

In the face of these pressures for equality from the communities, which were also supported by the European powers due to both idealistic and reel-politic motivations, the Ottoman statesmen of the nineteenth century tried to make some reforms. These reforms were administrative-legal ones as well as moral attempts in the sense that the Ottoman reformers, sincerely or not, tried to eliminate the degrading meaning attached to being non-Muslim. The Reform Edict of 1856 was especially significant in this sense since after that moment the effort of realizing equality became more pronounced. The 1856 Edict promised equality for all the subjects of the Empire in education, public employment, taxation, military service and justice. It forbade any discrimination and humiliation on the basis of religion, language and race.<sup>12</sup> As a symbolic act, the usage of the term “*reaya*” was forbidden in the official language, which, until the nineteenth century had been used to denote all the people of the Empire regardless of religion and language; but by the early nineteenth century it started to be used in qualifying only the non-Muslims and gained a pejorative tone.<sup>13</sup>

While, on the one hand, the equality of the non-Muslim communities with the Muslims was officially recognized, on the other hand, their internal autonomy as religious communities was reaffirmed, reassured, and indeed made more

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<sup>12</sup> Roderic H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century,” *The American Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (July 1954): 847.

<sup>13</sup> Roderic H. Davison, “Natioanlism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman Response,” in *Nationalism in a Non-national State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. William W. Haddad and William. Ochsenwald (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 35, 36, 39.

institutionalized by the state. Through the 1860s, as a necessity of the 1856 Edict, every community produced an official document organizing its internal administration.<sup>14</sup> In a sense, this meant the modernization of the *millet* system as these documents reproduced it in accordance with more legal-rational, secular and institutional principles. Some scholars, such as Stephan Astourian or Sia Anagnostopoulou, see a contradiction here as the imperial decrees of the nineteenth century, on the one hand, tried to constitute the infrastructure of secular Ottoman citizenship while, on the other hand, keeping traditional millet system based on the ethno-religious conceptualization of society.<sup>15</sup> We will see in the coming sections that the Ottoman Armenian community did not necessarily see this as a contradiction.

The Ottoman Constitution of 1876 and the opening of the first parliament the next year were big steps forward for the sake of founding both equality and representative democracy. However, this experience happened to be very brief when in February 1878 the sultan, Abdulhamid II, suspended the constitution and the parliament. His long reign, besides being a despotic rule, was a time in which the moral-political superiority of Islam and the Muslims was re-emphasized. This does not mean that the modernization of the Empire came to a total halt during his reign; on the contrary, the modernization in some areas such as education, communication, transportation continued at a high pace. What halted was the project of establishing

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>15</sup> Stephan H. Astourian, "Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization," in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 57; Foti Anagnostopoulou, "Tanzimat Ve Rum Milletinin Kurumsal Çerçevesi Patrikhane, Cemaat Kurumları, Eğitim," in *19. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Gayrimüslimler*, ed. Pēnelopē Stathē, 2nd ed, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları 87 (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003).



political equality of the subjects, their transformation to citizens in the new Ottomanist paradigm, as an important component of the reforms.

Nevertheless, it would be a lopsided judgment if it is said that the persona of Abdulhamid was the only barrier in the nineteenth century to the implementation of the reforms. There were others. For example, according to one comment, most of the Tanzimat bureaucrats wanted, in the final analysis, to keep the Christians in the secondary position because they fear to lose the power to them once equality was recognized.<sup>16</sup> The local notables might be mentioned as another circle opposing reforms as they tried to resist the centralizing reforms of the nineteenth century; thus they could act politically and financially more free outside the control of the center.<sup>17</sup> As Astourian states Kurdish and Turkish local elites saw the *Tanzimat* reforms as being to their disadvantage and in favor of the Armenians. Therefore, they sabotaged them by increasing the 'dosage' of violence on them. Also, they showed to the central government that it was powerless without their collaboration.<sup>18</sup> Their resistance became much more visible at some issues which threatened their material gain such as the land seizures.<sup>19</sup> Even some non-Muslims were also uneasy with the idea of

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<sup>16</sup> Taner Timur, "Uluslaşma Süreci İttihatçılık ve Devrim," in *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi*, ed. Sina Akşin, Sarp. Balci, and Barış Ünlü, *Yüzüncü Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963), 65. Yonca Köksal claims that local coalitions facilitated the reform process and local notables were incorporated into the local branches of Tanzimat bureaucracy, they became a tool of centralization. However, the answers of why and how questions remain unclear. Secondly, she considers the increasing level of tax collection as a criterion of gauging the success of the reforms. This might be an indicator of the success but it is very debatable to measure the triumph of the reforms through only betterment in tax collection. See Yonca Köksal, "Imperial Center and Local Groups: Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Edirne and Ankara," *New Perspectives on Turkey* no. 27 (Fall 2002): 107–138.

<sup>18</sup> Stephan H. Astourian, "The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity and Power," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Muge Göçek, and Norman M Naimark (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62, 63.

<sup>19</sup> For details see Chapter III.

equality. For example, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha states in his *Tezâkir* that some Greek clerics were not happy of being equal with the Jews. Even, they were ready to consent to the superiority of Islam not to be equal with the Jews.<sup>20</sup>

Overall speaking, despite some improvements, the reforms of the nineteenth century did not ultimately bring about equality between the Muslims and the non-Muslims.

### The 1908 Revolution<sup>21</sup>

The Revolution of 1908 refreshed the hopes of cohabitation of the different groups on the basis of equality as much as anything did before because the will and slogan of “equality, fraternity, and liberty” were popularized to the extent that ethno-religiously mixed masses shouted these principles on the streets together. In fact, the social unrest started to be felt by 1906. A series of uprisings erupted in several places such as Kastamonu, Erzurum, Trabzon, Zeytun, Samsun, and Bitlis in 1906 and 1907. Although in most of the cases the main objection was to high taxes, Aykut Kansu contends that the ultimate target of these movements was to change the regime, namely revolution. He demonstrates these events as the evidences of a pre-planned movement by the Committee of Union and Progress. For example, in the summer of 1907 in a declaration distributed in Erzurum it was mentioned that the

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<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir*, 3.baskı ed., Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları sa. 17 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 68.

<sup>21</sup> There is a disagreement between scholars about whether what happened in 1908 should be qualified as revolution or not. For such a discussion see Sina. Akşin et al., *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi, Yüzüncü Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 733–750. Although it is not a critical debate in terms of this dissertation’s aims, through the text the term revolution is preferred because people of that time perceived it as a radical change and presented it as such. They hoped that new era would bestow them a completely new life even though their expectations ended with disappointment within few years as details given below.

existing regime could be terminated through only strengthening the fraternity between the Muslims and the Christians. In November of the same year again in Erzurum the CUP made a call for the collaboration of all, regardless of race and religion, against the government. In the first few months of 1908, Kansu states, the action of civil disobedience were spread to every corner of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>22</sup> Kansu claims that, beyond the efforts of the political organizations such as the CUP or the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutyun*), people developed a political consciousness about the relation between taxation and representation; they demanded to have a say in distribution and disbursement of the taxes taken from them. In other words, they demanded participation to political decision making through representation.<sup>23</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu also approves that the local disturbances were turned into political movements demanding constitution by the CUP, the ARF (*Tashnaksutyun*) and partially by Prince Sabahaddin's the League of Private Initiative and Decentralization.<sup>24</sup>

Ottoman opposition parties, the CUP and the ARF being the main power behind it, held a congress in Paris between Dec. 27 and 29, 1907. Although they tried to agree on a common strategy for changing the regime, Hanioglu claims that the congress and the alliance at the end of it did not play a significant role in the 1908 Revolution.<sup>25</sup> As a matter of fact, the ultimate push that brought about the Revolution did not come from the people on the street, but from the army. The discontent in the army on the eve of the revolution had a role in the acceleration of the events. Mainly

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<sup>22</sup> A. Kansu, *1908 Devrimi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 82, 84, 93, 94.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>24</sup> M.Ş. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution* (New York Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

two factors created the discontent in the army: non-payment of the wages and long delays in demobilization.<sup>26</sup> The CUP was also active among soldiers to use and direct this discontent for its own purposes.<sup>27</sup> The meeting between the King Edward VII of England and the Russian tsar Nicholas II in Reval on 9-12 June 1908 was the spark that made the discontent in the army erupt since some middle rank officers in Macedonia thought that this was a bargain to part Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire, where ethnic conflict between the Muslims, the Greeks and the Bulgarians through gang bands had continued for a while. The CUP propagated that if this happened and the Ottoman soldiers retreated from Macedonia the Muslims would be surely massacred by the Bulgarian and Greek brigands. They held the Hamidian regime responsible for these troubles and claimed that it sowed the seeds of enmity among people of different faith.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the Reval meeting became an opportunity for the CUP member officers to realize the plan they had been preparing for a while. According to Niyazi Bey's memoirs, who became one of the two symbolic names of freedom fighters together with Enver Bey, around March 1908 the Ottoman military units in Macedonia had meetings in which they worked the plans for a general uprising.<sup>29</sup> Upon the Reval meeting the CUP published and sent a declaration to the European consulates in Macedonia, in which they announced that the cause of the problem in Macedonia was bad administration whose victims were all nations and ethnicities; and the CUP would not let Macedonia be prey of Russia's pan-Slavist ambitions.

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<sup>26</sup> A. L. Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923*, Turning Points (London ; New York: Longman, 1998), 24.

<sup>27</sup> Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, 98.

<sup>28</sup> Nader Sohrabi relays from *Şura-yı Ümmet*, the CUP journal; Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 102.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

Finally, on July 3 the CUP member adjutant-major (*kolağası*) Niyazi Bey and his men around two hundred soldiers and villagers took the mountains of Resne and declared themselves as the National Regiment of Resne. Other commanders and soldiers, including Enver who was one of the highest rank CUP members, joined them soon and the movement became a considerable armed rebellion within a short time. Niyazi, sending telegrams to the Palace, demanded the restoration of the constitution in the tone of an ultimatum. The high military commander General Şemsi Pasha sent by Abdulhamid to investigate and suppress the rebellion was shot dead by a CUP supporter officer on July 7. Additionally, the battalions that were sent from the Anatolian province of Aydın to fight against the rebels rejected fighting.<sup>30</sup> Finally, upon the numerous telegrams of ultimatum from Rumelia (Monastir, Salonica, Kosovo...) on July 23, which declared that rebellious forces would march to the capital if the constitution was not pronounced, Abdulhamid could not find any way out but accepting the demands.

In the initial months of the Revolution people seemed to internalize the principles of equality, fraternity, liberty, and justice wholeheartedly. The Muslims, the Christians and the Jews were celebrating the Revolution together. However, the final result was again a complete failure and disappointment since by the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 the hatred against the Christians got out of hand due to the dramatic defeat of the Ottoman army and the cruel treatments of the Balkan Muslims by the local Christians. After that point it became very difficult for people from different ethno-religious groups to listen to and understand each other. In other words, thereafter, inter-communal dialogue was hard to pursue calmly. The subsequent World War I of 1914-1918 and Turkish National War of 1920-1922

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 105–108, 126.

sealed the end of the dream of cohabitation of the Muslims and non-Muslims on the basis of equality and fraternity. Within roughly fifteen years after 1908, when people were shouting these principles, almost 90% of the Ottoman non-Muslims were physically non-existent. They were either massacred or banished.

In this narration the period between 1908 and 1912 might be marked as a critical time span since it might have been a time when the Ottoman communities laid the foundations of a new polity or political unity but all turned into “fiasco”. This dissertation aims to widen the perspective of the examination of this period by focusing on the Armenians as one of the Ottoman communities that were supposed to live together and constitute a polity. It tries to understand what Armenians thought and envisioned on social, political and cultural grounds after the 1908 Revolution till the beginning of the Balkan Wars in October 1912, and how their thoughts were shaped and changed within this time span. For the Ottoman Armenians 1908 did mean the revitalization of the constitutional regime not only at the country level but also at community level as the Armenian constitution (*Ermeni Nizamnamesi*) of 1863 was put into action after a long interval in also 1908. In a sense, Ottoman Armenian community experienced double re-constitutionalization in 1908. However, as it will be shown in coming chapters, they were not so sure about the future; on the contrary, *they were living in a continuous ebb and flow of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism*. Despite all negative signs, they were trying to convince themselves that everything would be good. In the frame of this general psychology of ambivalence and hesitation this work intends to search for the views and opinions produced in the Ottoman Armenian community along some more specific issues.

First, in Chapter I a general description of the social and political atmosphere after the Revolution will be provided with a special focus on how the events such as

the mutiny of March 31 and simultaneous Adana massacres and the attitude of the CUP influenced the mentality and psychology of the Armenians. Chapter II first makes a summary of the developments and change in the Ottoman Armenian community in the nineteenth century and the events that gave birth to the Armenian Constitution (*Ermeni Nizamnamesi*) in 1863; and later handle internal conflicts of the Armenian community after 1908, depicts the lines along which they were divided. Chapter III discusses the relations between the Armenians and their neighboring communities such as the Turks, Kurds, and Muslim immigrants from the Balkans and Caucasia. It tries to demonstrate the main problems causing ethnic tension between them such as land disputes and insecurity of life and property. It also traces the views of the Armenian intellectuals about the neighbor communities and their propositions for the solution of inter-communal problems. This chapter, for the sake of widening the view to the inter-communal relations in the Ottoman Empire, also looks at in a comparative perspective the different cases of ethnic relations in those places where ethnic cleansing occurred. Chapter IV focuses on the relation that the Ottoman Armenians envisioned between themselves and the state. In other words, it attempts to understand how the Ottoman Armenians defined and evaluated Ottoman identity and citizenship, how they correlated being Armenian and Ottoman at the same time. Their understanding of democracy and the administrative system they supported for the sake of democracy were also handled in this chapter. Chapter V, which should be considered in tandem with the Chapter IV, describes how the Ottoman Armenians assessed the military service in the Ottoman army as its 'free and equal' citizens. It emphasizes the relation between citizenship in democracy in a comparative perspective with the example of the conscription of the black people in the United States.

Although this text attempts to elaborate on the Ottoman Armenians' views and opinions one should *not* expect a full-fledged description of political and social situation of Ottoman Armenians of the time with, for example, objective quantitative data such as their population or other numbers, i.e. of the students, schools, and churches. Rather, it is interested in the *meaning* they attributed to the events, categories, and concepts. Their *perception, thoughts and feelings* about themselves and the country in which they had been living were the main concerns of this work. In other words, this is not an “objective” description of the Ottoman Armenian community between 1908 and 1912 but tries to sketch their *mental map*, what they thought and envisaged for the future. Likewise, this work does not aim to give a complete historical account of all topics touched upon, which would be insurmountable for a single dissertation. For example, when it mentions land problems between Armenian community and others it does *not* aim to illustrate how land regime, classification, and laws changed in the Ottoman Empire through time or what kind of problems occurred in modernization of land regime. Similarly, when it examines the extension of military service to Armenians with other non-Muslims in 1909 and Armenians' reaction to this, its purpose is not to discuss the modernization of the Ottoman army or give a history of Ottoman military reforms. Rather, *it is interested in how this kind of problems (land disputes, military service etc.) affected Armenians' thoughts and psychology about the country in which they had lived and their bonds to it.* To sum up, this dissertation aims to sketch the *subjectivity* of Ottoman Armenians.

It is also important to mention that although the terms like “Ottoman Armenians”, “Armenian community” are frequently used throughout the text they do not claim the homogeneity of the Ottoman Armenians. On the contrary, the author is



so aware of the internal divisions and conflicts of the community that a whole chapter is allocated to internal rifts producing tension. Then who are those Armenians speaking throughout the text? They are largely urban middle class professionals, teachers, college students, officials of political parties, editors, men of letters, professionals like advocates and doctors, and high and middle level clerics. Masses like peasants or small manufacturers and shopkeepers are present to the extent these circles give voice to them. Shortly, it might be said that this text largely reflects the views of the Ottoman Armenian middle class after the Revolution. In fact, the period after the Revolution was a time when middle class people gained significance and power in political and social life. The values, opinions and practices of this class got more popular, legitimate and advisory for the others. As Keith Watenpaugh says the 1908 Revolution made the middle class(es) more apparent and influential in daily life and politics. A certain set of manners, mores, tastes, and ideas were their reference to their distinct class identity, namely being middle class. They defined themselves as modern, and in doing so differentiated themselves from both ruling Sunni Muslim oligarchy and urban and rural poor. As a continuation of this claim they demanded a say in the processes of political decision making as equal citizens. The importance given to formal modern education, hard work, self-reliance, individual achievements and civil society are some of defining characteristics of middle class/bourgeoisie mentality. What brought about the influence of the middle class were its expertise in some modern domains such as technology, banking, journalism, education and its several connections with the West rather than its quantity. However, this does mean that in the Ottoman context they could get the political rights proportional to its social weight.<sup>31</sup> We will see that most of these

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<sup>31</sup> Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism*,

characteristics were also valid for the Armenian people whose reflections are handled in this text.

In order to understand their subjectivity this work largely utilizes the texts, i.e. newspaper articles, books, and booklets which they produced, and which are expected to reflect their mentality. The larger portion of the material are the Armenian newspapers published in Anatolian cities such as Sivas, Tokat, Erzurum, Trabzon, Harput, Adapazarı, and Izmir which constitutes a representative sample of the Anatolian Armenians who constituted the vast majority of the Ottoman Armenians. The situation of the Anatolian Armenians is especially important since the phenomenon of “Armenian question” in the literature refers to their conditions rather than the Armenians in the capital.

It should be also noted that the Anatolian Armenian newspapers have not been used before in the existing literature sufficiently, if any, although they are the most important resource to understand the Armenian intellectual life before the genocide. Thus, this dissertation, by using these newspapers extensively, intends to turn researchers’ attention to their value and potentiality to broaden the horizons of the late Ottoman historiography. Moreover, these newspapers can be read as the last few pages of a dead man’s diary, who wrote without knowing his imminent death. These are the whispers of the haunting ghosts who were not understood when they were alive and are still looking for peace. They have been still struggling to express themselves. This text has just listened to them and leaved the scene to their voice at some length.

## CHAPTER II:

### ATMOSPHERE AFTER THE REVOLUTION

In July 1908 transition from a despotic rule, that lasted for more than thirty years, to a constitutional parliamentary regime radically changed the psychology of people in a positive way and raised their hopes and expectations for a new life. However, since masses, both in Istanbul and Anatolian cities, were not expecting the re-establishment of the constitution and parliament soon, they hesitated to believe and thought that it was a new trick by Abdulhamid to trap his opponents when they saw the news on the third pages of the newspapers depicting the restoration of the constitution as an ordinary development.<sup>32</sup> When the edict ordering the opening of the parliament was announced the population of Istanbul and Anatolia, contrary to the joyfulness in Rumeli, got surprised at first.<sup>33</sup> If some newspapers and activists had not taken the lead and organized the street meetings and celebrations most probably masses would have not shaken off the astonishment of the Revolution immediately and grasp its meaning.<sup>34</sup>

Once people were convinced that it was not a trick they started to jubilate on the street, Muslim and non-Muslim together, to celebrate the new era. As it usually happens in such moments the idea of social contract among people was brought to

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<sup>32</sup> K. Emirođlu, *Anadolu'da Devrim Gnleri* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), 18, 19.

<sup>33</sup> T.Z. Tunaya, *Hrriyet'in İlanı* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi niversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 6.

<sup>34</sup> In order to observe this situation in some cities like İzmir, Bursa, Bolu, Ankara, Adana see Zeki Arıkan, "Dr. Ziya Somar'ın II. Meşrutiyet Tarihçiliđine Katkısı," in *II. Meşrutiyet'i Yeniden Dşnmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 42; Emirođlu, *Anadolu'da Devrim Gnleri*, 140, 141, 158, 171, 189. İ. H. Sunata describes a similar state for İstanbul in his memoirs. İ. Hakkı Sunata, *İstibdattan Meşrutiyete, Çocukluktan Gençliđe* (İstanbul: Trkiye İř Bankası Kltr Yayınları, 2006).

the fore. Various ethno-religious groups promised to protect each other's life, property and honor as theirs.<sup>35</sup> The new era was expected to be a time of freedom of speech and press. Everybody would be free to talk, discuss and participate to politics and public life, which was the desire and hope of people. As a matter of fact, the number of newspapers, clubs, and associations as an indicator of a vivid public life skyrocketed immediately after the Revolution although most of them started to wither within a year or so. As a foreign observer relays, people, during the initial months of the Revolution, opened clubs and organized public discussions without any fear or hesitation. Everybody was trying to participate in these debates. Press was the most important medium of the discussion. Even those who could not read listened to others reading the gazettes loudly.<sup>36</sup> According to the report by a bookseller in the second month of the Revolution "the sales were phenomenal". "It was impossible to meet the demand for books on law, philosophy, military science, travel and a score of other subjects".<sup>37</sup>

Tark Zafer Tunaya argues that during the second constitutional period people unprecedentedly started to think that using state power was related to their own destiny and accordingly regarded thinking, criticizing, expressing views in political matters as their duty. Governing should have not been a work restricted with the

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<sup>35</sup> Tunaya, *Hürriyet'in İlanı*, 4, 5.

<sup>36</sup> G. F. Abbott, *Turkey in Transition* (s.l.: General Books, 2010), 7, 8. It was originally published in 1909. Just after the Revolution the number of newspapers and periodicals including those published in non-Turkish languages is given as 739 by a contemporary source, *Revue du Mond Musulman*. Some others claim that after the Revolution 660 new periodicals, 357 of which were Turkish, started to be published. If one considers that before the Revolution total number of periodicals had been around 150 this was a clear boom. However, after the March 31 incident the trend rapidly turned back. The numbers for 1912, 1913, 1914, were 61, 68, and 63 respectively. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, "İkinci Meşrutiyet'in Birinci Meşrutiyeti: 'Matbuat'," in *İkinci Meşrutiyet Devrinde Basın ve Siyaset*, ed. Hakan Aydın (Konya: Palet Yayınları, 2010), 223, 224.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (New York, London: C. Scribner's sons; T. F. Unwin, 1909), 110.

sultan or cabinet; every citizen might have had something to say.<sup>38</sup> Masses became one of the direct parameters and actors of political life. In this context mass mobilization and street protests also became a tool in politics.<sup>39</sup> The observation that there was an increasing eagerness of people to participate politics is not peculiar to Tunaya. Beside others, Michelle Campos, a more recent scholar, also describes this same situation after the Revolution as a demand from ordinary people to take the stage and discuss the meaning of events surrounding them.

“These spontaneous gatherings where previously banned terms and ideas were bandied about freely not only symbolized the end of sultan's absolutist power but, more importantly, represented a broader struggle to control the symbolism and language of the revolution, and through that, to define the contours of imperial political culture. In this power vacuum individual Ottomans stepped onto the revolutionary stage and voiced their expectations of the revolution and began to imagine how they would engage and participate in the new era.”<sup>40</sup>

People also were trying to understand what constitution and parliamentary system mean, what are their differences from other ways of government. For example, in Salonica popular lectures whose subjects were political justice, liberty, history of constitutional systems were being held.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Armenian Hnchak Party official Hmayag Aramiants had a lecture, titled as “Political and Economic Freedom”, in a public meeting held in Gedikpasha, Istanbul, on 23 September 1908,

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<sup>38</sup> Tunaya, *Hürriyet'in İlanı*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Nadir Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere During the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908–18),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (September 2007): 4.

<sup>40</sup> Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011), 34.

<sup>41</sup> Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, 132.

in which he explained the differences between monarchy, constitutional monarchy (which had different versions) and republic in detail.<sup>42</sup> He especially emphasized the importance of being elected for the rulers by the votes of citizens; it was the main source of legitimacy; and

“Citizens are those who gather with the other members of the public, having equal rights, and specify rules and regulations for their country, secure the harmony of public life and enjoy every right on the condition of not harming others’ liberty...In other words, perfect citizen is the one who is invited to make rules for himself and for his compatriots and make these rules compulsory for all, from the most humble peasant to the highest courtier.”

Citizens use this power through their representatives; therefore, there cannot be any authority, or will, even the sultan’s, above the representatives of elected by people.<sup>43</sup>

Constitutional regime was regarded as a kind of government where citizens could and should intervene in the decision making and object to what is not for their benefit; and this is true not only for macro or abstract political problems but also for daily issues. A comment from Tokat/Yevdokia, justifying the evaluations above, says that if there was any difference between old (Hamidian) and new (Young Turk) regimes it was the freedom of speech and press. Although the improvement went on very slowly, they (Armenians) felt freer to write and speak, articulate their feelings and pains, criticize bad treatments, and demand their rights.

“Despite our restricted situation we should not be silent and sit idle even if we are not party members. Our age-old problems and deep wounds are not to be healed through silence but through repeating our demands till our voice get listened and find a response. We need medium for this, and

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<sup>42</sup> This oration was published later as a booklet. Hmayag Aramians, *Azatut’iwn: K’aghak’akan Ew Tntesakan* (K. Polis: Tpagrut’iwn V. ew H. Tēr Nersēsean, 1908).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 15.

the only medium is press that should be the mirror of the society with all its colors and phenomena.”<sup>44</sup>

By the same token, another Armenian author complaining of the Regie of Tobacco and talking about its harms on economy and the material interests of Ottoman farmers, made a call to public to be alert when this monopoly in tobacco business would be renewed and defend their rights because “it is an incontestable truth that one of the main reasons of economic disasters a country faces is the indifference of ordinary citizens to defend their rights”. He adds that during Hamidian regime it had been understandable and partly acceptable to be passive because of the oppression but *in a constitutional regime there might have been no excuse for indifference against political and economic affairs.*<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, there were some, though in minority, complaining of this high political activism which “corrupted” ordinary people and deterred them from their work. According to this perspective, the interest of people in politics increased too much that they started to neglect their regular responsibilities. One of the proponents of this perspective claims that one year after the Revolution it was time to calm down and return to work. Although it was understandable to be interested in what was going on making politics should have been left to talented people.<sup>46</sup> Another such similar comments point that Armenian people were interested in politics too much. Instead, they should have concentrated more on economic problems and allocated more mental and physical energy for economic development. He adds that the concrete contributions of artisans, farmers were more important than

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<sup>44</sup> Editorial, “The role of provincial newspaper”, *Iris*, Dec. 11, 1910, No: 2, p. 1, 2.

<sup>45</sup> A. G. Bodurian, “Tobacco Regie”, *Putanya*, June 1, 1910, No: 16, p. 187.

<sup>46</sup> K. Meztadurian, “Our Debts”, *Antranik*, June 20, 1909, No: 24, p. 2.

the words of teachers or poets.<sup>47</sup> Such arguments generally came from those who were not party members or supporters; and theirs was not the dominant approach to politics in public opinion of the Armenian community. However, they articulated a reaction against “over-politicization” of people.

### Liberty and Rising Expectations

One of the slogans of the Revolution was liberty (*hürriyet*); but most of the ordinary people were not sure what it meant. The first feeling they had was a kind of relief from fear of extortion and espionage. After a long time, people could gather and associate with their friends and travel fearlessly.<sup>48</sup> Rather than attributing abstract political meanings to liberty they wanted to see its concrete results in their daily life. However, this way of thought brought about “excessive” anticipations. Everybody interpreted liberty however they wished. People thought that since “liberty came” they could do whatever they wanted. It was generally understood as the abolishment of all rules and regulations even to the degree of absurdity or weirdness. A woman might have rejected to pay bridge toll in the name of liberty; peasants thought that thereafter they would never pay taxes thanks to liberty; or some claimed that due to liberty ulema would be able to remove human illustrations or portraits from shops! Even, when an Albanian was condemned to death for killing a Christian he asked: “Is this what you call liberty?”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> K. Anbarcian, “My Sugesstions”, Antranik, March 27, 1910, No: 58, p. 1, 2.

<sup>48</sup> Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, 108.

<sup>49</sup> For these examples see Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (New York, London: C. Scribner’s sons; T. F. Unwin, 1909), 101; Emiroğlu, *Anadolu’da Devrim Günleri*, 158, 171; Nader



There was also pressure from prisoners and their relatives to be released since thereafter everyone would be free. Amnesty was wanted not only for political prisoners but also for ordinary criminals. As a result of this confusion the Police Ministry released ordinary criminals from Istanbul's General Prison by mistake and the government, fearing that rearresting them would cause unrest and violence, did nothing to correct this mistake. On the contrary, it extended this action to other prisons to prevent riots.<sup>50</sup>

Some other people interpreted liberty as being able to drink alcohol in public space freely, and firing arms without any intervention;<sup>51</sup> or another "indicator" of liberty was free arm trade. For example, in Adana criers were selling every kind of firearm by wandering and shouting on the streets without any questioning because people thought that there was liberty, no one could interrupt any one.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, a traveler evaluates free sale of arms in Adapazarı as a sign of liberty.<sup>53</sup>

Liberty was grasped as a magic wand that would make true all dreams of people, which were not necessarily harmonious with each other. People had been waiting for decades to see these dreams come true. The re-promulgation of the constitution was perceived by ordinary people as a development which would bring about betterment in public services such as lowering the taxes, building new roads,

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Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 184, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 176.

<sup>51</sup> Emiroğlu, *Anadolu'da Devrim Günleri*, 158, 171.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>53</sup> Yenovk Armen, "Out of Istanbul", *Putanya*, Jan. 1, 1910, No: 1, p. 2.

expanding education as well as ending corruption, bribery, and nepotism.<sup>54</sup> Liberty became an umbrella term into which people filled everything they desired. Expectations were high and people were impatient; and the more expectations got higher the more destructive would be the disappointment.

### Old and New as Black and White

People thought and hoped that two eras, before and after the Revolution, were (or hopefully would be) so different from each other like black and white. Hamidian time was called *devr-i sabık* (*ancien regime*) whereas the new period as *devr-i hürriyet*<sup>55</sup>. As Michelle Campos points this was not just a neutral dichotomy between old and new but it also connotes the difference between good and evil, light and dark. An Islamist-modernist monthly in Cairo, like many others, furthers this comparison as between justice and injustice, knowledge and ignorance, strength and weakness.<sup>56</sup>

In the initial months of the Revolution Abdulhamid was credited as the one who bestowed the constitution and the parliament.<sup>57</sup> The sultan himself and some others had been trying to settle the image that the constitution was brought back because he thought that people were ready/mature enough for it. The cabinet, just

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<sup>54</sup> H. Aliyar Demirci, “1908 Parlamentosu’na Göre Meşrutiyetin Değerleri Ve İlkeleri,” in *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi*, ed. Sina. Akşin, Sarp. Balcı, and Barış Ünlü, Yüzüncü Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 307.; Deniz Dölek, “Yerelde İdeolojik Dönüşüm: II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Sivas Vilayeti’nde Osmanlılık Pratiğinden Türk Milliyetçiliğine Geçiş,” in *II. Meşrutiyet’i Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, n.d.), 120.

<sup>55</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref, *Son Vak’ânüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi: II. Meşrutiyet Olayları, 1908-1909*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları sa. 133 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1996), 13.

<sup>56</sup> Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Hasan Amca, *Doğmayan Hürriyet: Bir Devrin İçyüzü 1908-1918*, Arba Yayınları 31 (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1989), 69.

after the announcement of the constitution, asserted that “it is due to the Sultan’s benevolence that the Chamber of Deputies is summoned”.<sup>58</sup> Abdulhamid, in his speech in the opening ceremony of the chamber of deputies, repeated his claim that he had closed the parliament temporarily and the constitution was reestablished on his own will. The official response of the deputies to this speech, accusing of high rank bureaucrats for the past misdeeds including the closure of the parliament, in a way approved his view. Given the attitude of the masses on the streets, cheering for the sultan, applauding him, popular perception was not dramatically different from this.<sup>59</sup> Shortly, although there might have been many who were not happy with this, the atmosphere towards Abdulhamid just after the Revolution seemed positive. However, the wind sharply changed after his dethroning in April 1909 when military munity/counter-revolutionary movement was suppressed; and now his reign was being described openly and definitely as "despotism" and "cruelty".<sup>60</sup> Many Armenians were among the fervent and creative suppliers of these views. An Armenian describes Abdulhamid as an “unmatched monster whose mortiferous breath, continuously blowing over our country’s mountains and valleys and draining every source of life for thirty-two years, corroded the country morally and economically.” The author continues that Abdulhamid destroyed the harmonious relations between different elements of the Empire, detached them and made them enemies of each other. The country was still trying to solve the problems created by

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<sup>58</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 137.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 143, 145; Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, 203.

<sup>60</sup> Mehmet Ö. Alkan, “II. Meşrutiyet’te Eğitim, İttihat Ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Milliyetçilik, Militarizm Veya ‘Militer Türk-İslam Sentezi’,” in *II. Meşrutiyet’i Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 67.

him.<sup>61</sup> In this deep darkness suddenly came the constitution. “On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the bright rays of the sun tore away the curtain of darkness, and a new plentiful, vivid life started”.<sup>62</sup> Another author describes the Hamidian reign as so terrible that people even thought to commit suicide due to hopelessness or they emigrated abroad to never come back. “One day the veil on our mind was removed unexpectedly. Constitution, it was just a word which spread to the darkest corners of the provinces from the official organs of the capital. Was it real? Was it possible? Who could believe in something that had been impossible in Turkey? What was constitution anyway? We did not know; but there was a change...they promised: ‘Persecution and the policy of destruction will end’”.<sup>63</sup>

Armenian political parties also revised their position under new circumstances. Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutyun*) was already seen as the most important Armenian partner of the CUP in realizing the Revolution and also in the aftermath. Not only *Tashnaks* but also *Hnchaks* declared their support for the new regime. Even, as a symbolic sign of attitude change, the party changed its name from Revolutionary *Hnchakian* Party to Social Democratic *Hnchakian* Party in its 6<sup>th</sup> congress in 1909.<sup>64</sup> Before this name change they had already stated on 24 November 1908 that since there was a new constitution the party would work according to new circumstances. One of the prominent leaders of *Hnchaks*, Sabahgolian, said that since the constitution was declared they left their revolutionary position and started to work for the development of the country.

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<sup>61</sup> Haigag, “How is Ottoman victory secured?”, *Iris*, Oct. 1/15, 1911, No: 14-15, p. 92.

<sup>62</sup> *Antranik*, Jan. 24, 1909, No: 1, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> S. T., “Political and Economic Situation in Sivas”, *Antranik*, March, 1910, No: 56, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Arsen Avagyan and Gaidz F Minassian, *Ermeniler Ve İttihat Ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), 40.

Similarly, Armenian Constitutional *Ramgavar* Party, founded after the Revolution, mentioned in its program that a new period of happiness and development opened after the toppling of despotism and the birth of the constitutional regime. Their program says that there had been valid reasons to have secret revolutionary organizations during the despotic regime; but now when civil rights were provided and everybody was free to express his ideas about the betterment of the state and people there was no reason to keep such organizations. Hereafter, open and constitutional organizations would be founded. Accordingly, *Ramgavar* aimed democratization of the constitution through some modifications and claimed that decentralization and the improvement of communal rights on the regional level were the guarantees of the territorial unity of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>65</sup>

There is an interesting example which shows that this perception of “new beginning” was not restricted with ‘big issues’ like politics or economy or with political parties but infused to the practices of daily life. An advertisement of a hotel reads: “Former famous hotel-owner Nerses Papazian from Adapazarı who had left his occupation unwillingly under the repression of despotism now *inspired by the goodness of Constitutional regime* again established a hotel in Galata”.<sup>66</sup> The suppression of the old regime had been also felt on economic life and the expectations from the new era in every field were so high that they made reference to constitution in even such an advertisement of business purposes.

Hamid’s reign was also remembered by some provincial Armenian newspaper as a time when the territorial loss and exploitation of the Ottoman Empire by foreign powers had peaked. After his deposition, *Antranik* from Sivas reminds its

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 41, 43, 46.

<sup>66</sup> *Putanya*, Sept. 10, 1910, No: 24, p. 264. Italics are added.

readers that he was a sultan who had lost many territories like Kars, Batum, Western Rumelia, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Egypt, Cyprus, Crete etc. and opened the way of exploitation of the Ottoman people by foreign institutions such as the Regie of Tobacco, *Duyun-u Umumiye* (Public Debt Administration) and alien railroad companies.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, they thought that new era would also be a time when international strength of the Empire and its independence vis-à-vis Europe would increase. Finally, the Ottoman nation would show European nations that their country could be as powerful and noble as their countries.<sup>68</sup>

### Hope and Optimism

Hope and optimism were two remarkable feelings of the new epoch. Every social stratum thought that their problems would be solved very soon and expected economic and social progress for the whole country. Many deputies, especially non-Muslims, regarded human rights and liberties as the base of the constitution. For Ohannes Vartkes, Erzurum deputy, the essence of constitutional regime is first the security of life, and later freedom of press, speech and gathering. Also for Krikor Zohrap, constitutional regime defines itself through liberties whereas absolutism through prohibitions. In a constitutional regime state should not restrict freedoms of individuals while it pursues governmental affairs.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Antranik*, April 18, 1909, No: 14, p. 1. One can easily observe an anti-Europe tone which is a frequent theme in Armenian press of Anatolia especially in terms of European business investments in Anatolia.

<sup>68</sup> For some examples of this approach from Jewish-Arab press in Palestine see Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 36, 37.

<sup>69</sup> Demirci, "1908 Parlamentosu'na Göre Meşrutiyetin Değerleri Ve İlkeleri," 318 ,319.

One can say that Armenians, with other non-Muslims, were the happiest of all because the Revolution promised them not only the end of oppression and massacre but also promotion to the level of first-class equal citizens. Mehmed Reşat justified these hopes in his speech in the ceremony of his ascending to the throne (*Nutk-u Hümayun*) in April 1909: “(T)he ethnic clashes in the past will be totally erased thereafter, and the children of the fatherland, living in real peace and prosperity, will utilize the natural wealth of the country”.<sup>70</sup>

Anatolian Armenian press after the revolution also reflects this psychology of rising expectations. A commentator from Sivas, for instance, describes the *ancien* regime as a despotic hell which came to an end by the hand of Enver and Niyazi and other officers in cooperation with Armenian revolutionaries. Now, a new period of freedom began in which the brains that had forgotten thinking would think, the mouths that had forgotten speaking would speak, and the hands that had forgotten working would work. The Armenian and the Turk would create miracles hand in hand.<sup>71</sup>

This optimistic atmosphere seems to have expanded into the relations between Armenian communities of Anatolia and local, both civil and military, high level bureaucrats in each district. According to the newspapers of the time, direct contact between them increased after the Revolution. For example, the vice governor of Sivas, Vehbi Bey’s visit to one of the Armenian schools of the city in January 1909 caused excitement and positive feelings among Armenians. *Antranik* newspaper reports this visit as such: “The existence of the constitution started to be felt also in the provinces gradually. During the old regime it was rarely seen or heard

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<sup>70</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref, *Son Vakâinivis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, 55.

<sup>71</sup> Y. M. Bolsetsian, “Progress”, *Antranik*, Jan.24, 1909, No: 1, p. 1, 2.

that a governor made a visit to a communal school. It is a pleasure for us to announce vice governor Vehbi Bey's visit to *Aramian Varjaran*." He stayed in the school for almost an hour during which he exchanged ideas about education with the teachers and Bishop Shavarsh.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, governor of Erzurum, Celal Bey, gave an unnoticed visit to Armenian schools of the city (*Artznian*, *Hripsimyats* and *Sanasarian*). He attended classes, and questioned students. *Haratch*, the Armenian newspaper of the town which has an affinity with the ARF says that he was especially happy to see the importance given to Turkish language at Armenian schools. He had lunch at *Sanasarian* Schools with students. This visit was perceived happily by Armenian teachers and students since they saw this as an encouragement.<sup>73</sup> Just as another example, the commander of 5<sup>th</sup> Army, Müşir İbrahim Paşa, visited Armenian prelate and the central school in Erzincan on June 26, 1909. He was received very warmly by the cheering and clapping students. One of the students read a small message in Turkish to thank him for his honorary presence at their school. Ibrahim Paşa advised cooperation for the development of the country which was a gift won by the blood of heroes. The correspondent says that the atmosphere of the visit and pasha's talk was very positive, warm and promising.<sup>74</sup> As a matter of fact, such visits by civil and military high level bureaucrats to communal institutions (schools, prelacies, clubs...) are frequent in the Armenian provincial press and reported as noteworthy events, as a sign of "warm relations" between the state and Ottoman Armenian community. Even in one case going beyond just a visit, Sirri Bey, sub-governor of Adapazarı, started to teach statistics at

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<sup>72</sup> *Antranik*, Feb. 7, 1909, No: 3, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Haratch*, Nov. 3, 1909, No: 45, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Haratch*, July 3, 1909, No: 10, p. 4.



the Armenian Central (*Getronagan*) School of Adapazari. But he gave up after two months since his teaching was not found sufficient enough by the school board!<sup>75</sup>

In addition, whenever an Armenian institution organized an event such as a soiree, conference, theater play, graduation ceremony local governmental officials were present there. For example, in a soiree, organized in Sivas for the benefit of Armenian hospital of the town, the governor Nazım Pasha, generals along other high bureaucrats such as *defterdar* or *mektupcu* were present. During the soiree classical pieces from Mozart and Schubert were played besides popular songs by local artists.<sup>76</sup> The famous nationalist poet Mehmed Emin (Yurdakul), who became the governor of Sivas in 1910, also made a visit to Hnchakian Club and made an encouraging speech to the members.<sup>77</sup>

### Shock: March 31 Incidents and Adana Massacres

In this general atmosphere of optimism a shock came. On April 13, 1909 (March 31 in old calendar) a mutiny broke out among some soldiers stationed in Istanbul, which overwhelmed the capital for ten days. Apparently, they were discontent with the new regime and demanded “*sharia*” back. They forced the change of cabinet, and suspension of the parliament; attacked those parties and newspapers which they saw as the supporters of the new regime. The mutiny was suppressed, after a short firefight, by the Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) coming from Rumeli, the ‘heart’ of the Revolution, which was supported by volunteers from different ethnic groups. At

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<sup>75</sup> *Putanya*, Oct. 20, 1911, No: 22, p. 500, 502.

<sup>76</sup> Editorial, “A Noticable Soiree”, *Antranik*, Dec. 19, 1909, No: 51, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Antranik*, June 5, 1910, No: 68, p. 4.

the end a large group of people was hung, including Dervish Vahdeti, as the leaders or supports of the uprising.

Neither contemporary sources nor historians handling this event later could agree on its character and organizers, if there was any. According to one comment, neither the Palace nor the Porte nor the opposition consisted of Liberals and Mohammedan Association (*Ittihad-i Muhammedi*) initiated the uprising, on the contrary they were caught by surprise but later some of them tried to use the momentum of the event for their own benefit.<sup>78</sup> One of the contemporary witnesses of the event Hasan Amca says "...31 March was not an organized action. The reasons that gave way to this incident were deliberate and unintentional actions as well of both parties [Ittihadists and their opponents]. It might be evaluated as the last step of an unconscious walk...This incident was born out of the actions that used religion for political purposes...Sultan Abdulhamid preferred to be a spectator of the events. He did not either approve or oppose effectively."<sup>79</sup> However, there were also some others who thought that it was organized by Abdulhamid himself as a reactionist movement. For example, Abdurrahman Sheref, as a chronicler of the period, says that the 31 March revolt was the work of reactionist forces that were discontent with the constitution. They, under the direction of Abdulhamid, provoked soldiers and ordinary people.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, another witness of the events, Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, a high level bureaucrat of the time, did not believe either that Abdulhamid was personally responsible or the organizer of the 31 March event. Only

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<sup>78</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 225.

<sup>79</sup> Amca, *Doğmayan Hürriyet*, 82, 83.

<sup>80</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref, *Son Vakâüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, 18, 19.

the perpetrators might have some hopes on him.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Kamil Pasha says that Hamid was so "broken in health and spirit" and "in extreme fear for his life" that he could not engineer it. Mohammedan Association had a much more provocative role according to Kamil Pasha. But, the CUP sent telegrams to every corner of the Empire accusing Abdulhamid of destroying the constitutional regime to facilitate and legitimize his dethroning.<sup>82</sup> It seems that there are not definite proofs to claim that Abdülhamid was the organizer of the 31 March incidents. However, it can be said that he did not take action immediately to prevent the violence either out of fear or opportunism. He might have followed the events passively to see whether he can utilize the revolt for his advantage.

Another and opposite view, sounding like a conspiracy theory, is that the mutiny was organized by the government behind which the real power was the CUP in order to eliminate the sultan and opposition by using the event as a pretext.<sup>83</sup> One of the facts that the supporters of this "theory" bring to the fore was that the mutiny broke out among infantrymen brought to Istanbul by the CUP. However, again there is not enough evidence to accept this claim as the main motive behind the rebellion.

The main engine power of the mutiny was the ranker soldiers who felt themselves threatened by the new rules and regulations in the army, some of which reportedly prevented them from performing some of their religious duties such as daily prayers (*namaz*). Also, they claimed that they were despised and mobbed by the younger officers coming from military schools. So, before the mutiny, there had been

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<sup>81</sup> Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyete Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2000), 234.

<sup>82</sup> A. L. Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923, Turning Points* (London ; New York: Longman, 1998), 53, 54.

<sup>83</sup> For some works claiming this see Baran Hocaoğlu, *II. Meşrutiyette İktidar Muhalefet İlişkileri 1908- 1913* (Kitap Yayınevi, 2010), 119 n. 26.

already a sharp division in the army between them and educated officers for a while. Rankers thought that there was a plan to eliminate them. For example, they claimed that new tests that the personnel had to take would be used as a pretext to purge them from the army.

The second largest group supporting the uprising was the lower rank Islamic clerics and students of religion (*softa*) who were also discontent with some of the propositions of the constitution such as equality with non-Muslims. Additionally and in practical ground, they opposed new regulations of conscription that would end their exemption from military service. In accordance with these motivations the mutineers demanded the resignation of some statesmen whom they saw as the architects of new regulations such as the Minister of War Rıza Pasha and Primer Minister Hilmi Pasha. They also stipulated the expulsion of some prominent CUP members such as Ahmed Rıza, Huseyin Cahid, Mehmet Talat. One of their demands called for the dismissal of their superior educated officers and reassignment of those ranker officers “who were treated unjustly”.<sup>84</sup>

Whoever the organizers, whatever the reasons were, Armenians and other Christians of the capital especially got worried and became stressful since they thought that revolted soldiers might have attempted mass killings against them. William Mitchell Ramsay, an observer of the incidents, reports that while the army from Salonica was at the gates of Constantinople, there was a general fear that a massacre would be organized by the order of Sultan Abdulhamid against the Christians, particularly Armenians, to make European powers occupy the city and thus “he would save his skin”. According to Ramsay, the Salonica army hastened to

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<sup>84</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 228, 229, 239.

enter the city earlier than they had planned to prevent such a massacre.<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, Armenian newspapers of April 1909 report that around 3000 Armenians were gathered in the main church of Constantinople since they thought that it was safer there.<sup>86</sup>

The tension was not restricted with the capital. Telegrams from different cities of Anatolia questioning the situation and safety of their deputies were pouring to the capital.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, what happened in some locations of Anatolia was much more horrific than Istanbul. At the same time when all these were taking place in Istanbul bloody events broke out in Adana and its environs, where tens of thousands of Armenians were massacred by mobs and soldiers. What is the relation between this event and the March 31 uprising or whether they were organized by same people could not be established firmly. However, considering the simultaneous tensions in distinct locations of Anatolia makes one suspicious. Observations of W. M. Ramsay who was travelling in Anatolia at that time, are especially interesting in this sense. He reports that just after the mutiny of March 31, Christians of Konia expected massacre against them. According to the statements of people Ramsay met, three hodjas came to Konia and preached for the killing of the Christians. However, Muslim crowds did not respond to this provocation. What complicates the issue more and makes it weird is that some Muslim villagers around Konia asked Ramsay whether Armenians were coming to kill them. A rumor was spread that there was an Armenian army of 20.000 (!) soldiers marching to massacre Muslims. In another village four hours south of Konia Muslim villagers were in terror since two men had passed through the village and announced that a large Armenian army was coming

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<sup>85</sup> William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Revolution in Constantinople and Turkey: a Diary*, Elibron Classics Replica Ed (Boston: Elibron Classics, 2005), 84, 135, 136.

<sup>86</sup> Relayed by Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler Ve İttihat Ve Terakki*, 59, 60.

<sup>87</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 258.

from the north, sacking the villages whereas, certainly, there was no such an army. The attitude of the governor of Konia was also suspicious since he simply disappeared from the scene during the tension. Ramsay also notes that this kind of tension occurred also in different cities like Kayseri. He got these impressions in his trip to Anatolia just after the 31 March incident, collecting information from natives. He concludes that there was a central plan designed by Abdulhamid to show that Young Turks were not able to provide the unity of all races and religions and control the country.<sup>88</sup> Although the Muslim villagers did not respond to the provocation in Konia similar provocations “worked” in Adana. We learn from Ahmet Sherif, who visited the region as the correspondent of newspaper *Tanin* in February 1910, that Muslim villagers in Adana were mobilized against Armenians by the rumors that Armenians had revolted and been massacring Muslims, and about to reach their village.<sup>89</sup>

There are also other first-hand statements reflecting the tension in other parts of Anatolia at the same time. For example, we learn from the reports of Masterson, the American consul in Harput (Mezre), that at the end of April 1909, serious tension arose also in Harput. He reported that the grisly accounts of the bloodshed in Adana had been related to the local population of Harput by 150 natives of Harput, who had been in Adana during the incident and “come back, nearer dead than alive through flight and who had been detailing at great length the horrors of the massacres in Adana, Tarsus, and Marash.” The consul also claimed that he had learnt from a dependable source that the governor of Mamuret-ul Aziz had received a telegram on April 23 ordering the massacre of Armenians in Harput. He credited the governor,

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<sup>88</sup> Ramsay, *The Revolution in Constantinople and Turkey*, 201–204, 259, 287.

<sup>89</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanîn* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 150.

Ali Nusret Pasha, for not obeying the telegram and preventing similar violence in Harput. During the next four days, until the news reporting the deposition of Abdulhamid reached the town, “the suspense was terrible, the Christian community [remembering the 1895 events] was expecting a massacre at any time and the greatest excitement and confusion prevailed.”<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, Macfie relays from British official sources that in Erzincan and Erzurum also mutinies broke out but thanks to the swiftness of the officers sympathetic to the CUP they were repressed relatively quickly. It was reported by the CUP newspaper *Tanin* that some soldiers in Erzurum shouted “we want *şeriat* we do not want liberty” and detained fifty three young educated officers in a secret location. Armenians of Erzurum also became a special target of the mutineers as they broke the windows of the shops owned by Armenians. Local cleric also joined it by propagating that “CUP had sold the fatherland to infidels”.<sup>91</sup> In Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, Beirut Muslim mobs paraded and threatened Christians.<sup>92</sup> Keith Watenpaugh justifies the tension and worry of the Christians of Aleppo through his research of the newspapers of the time published in the city. “The freeing of notables arrested for incitement or failing to suppress a massacre of Antioch's Armenians by Muslims of the city troubled several Christian writers in Aleppo. They feared that the exoneration of these notables by the authorities in Istanbul would be interpreted as license to kill non-Muslims with impunity, or a retreat from the rule of law and

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<sup>90</sup> B.J. Merguerian, “Kharpert: The View from the United States Consulate,” in *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, ed. R.G. Hovannisian, vol. 3, UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series. Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces. (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 297, 298.

<sup>91</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 258.

<sup>92</sup> Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923*, 47.

egalitarian and secularizing reforms".<sup>93</sup> Even before the events erupted in Istanbul, Armenians of Gürün experienced fear of massacre. According to a report sent from Gürün to Sivas, in the second half of February 1909, local Armenians had a fear of massacre upon a telegram coming from Kayseri, saying "we are alive and our properties secure, we do not go to the bazaar". This means that the Armenians of Gürün avoided being visible in public during those days. However, it is not mentioned whether there was any other concrete reason to be afraid of but the correspondent says that the Armenians of Gürün were in fear because those who organized the 1895 massacres were still holding their office. "They changed their shirt but not nature...How come that Armenians are not afraid of when such hands red with Armenian blood still govern them".<sup>94</sup>

In the final analysis, one cannot eventually be sure of the truth of all these about travelling "hodjas" or provocateurs, all might be just rumors. However, the tension was real; *what is more critical is that such things, truth or lie, triggered or inflamed the enmity and fear of ethno-religious groups against each other. Despite all sermons of fraternity, they were still highly suspicious of each other and expecting an attack at any moment. In other words, there was such a memory and imagination that made them very ready to have believed in rumors.* As Vangelis Kechriotis says, in the context of Smyrna after the Revolution, there was an ongoing distrust between Muslims and Christians which could easily bring about misunderstandings and fight. He shows how every social conflict or tension in Izmir area between 1908 and 1910 produced by incidents such as a strike in railways, a sinking ship or a fight between two soldiers, not to mention the economic boycott

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<sup>93</sup> Keith David Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2006), 96.

<sup>94</sup> *Antranik*, Feb. 28, 1909, No: 6, p. 2.



against Greek manufacturers and products due to the annexation of Crete by Greece, had the potential of becoming a severe and bloody ethno-religious conflict.<sup>95</sup> In other words, whenever a social problem which did not necessarily have an ethnic character emerged Christians and Muslims started to await an attack even an attempt of massacre from the other side. In this general atmosphere, Armenians, who had still vivid memories of 1894-1896 massacres, were especially nervous and, as contemporary observers mention, wanted to see solid proofs on the side of the Young Turks showing their commitment to the constitutional ideals.<sup>96</sup>

### From Hope to Doubt

March 31 incident and Adana massacres caused a great shock in the public, especially among Armenians. By the words of an author from Izmir, it took the “rose colored glasses” from their eyes and made them restless and worried.<sup>97</sup> Ottoman Armenian community mobilized their sources to heal the wounds of massacres. Besides campaigns in different cities to raise money they also organized associations for the care of the orphans. Newspapers of the time are full of the news relaying such campaigns and initiatives. To count some, an association was founded in Izmir to help the orphans of Adana massacres. They organized an event in which various commodities donated by people were sold for the benefit of the orphans.<sup>98</sup> Civil

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<sup>95</sup> Vangelis Kechriotis, “The Enthusiasm Turns to Fear: Everyday Life Relations Between Christians and Muslims in Izmir in the Aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution,” in “*L’ivresse de La Liberté*”: *La Révolution de 1908 Dans l’Empire Ottoman*, ed. François Georgeon (Paris; Louvain; Walpole: Ma. : Peeters, 2012), 295, 299, 304, 309–312.

<sup>96</sup> Abbott, *Turkey in Transition*, 83.

<sup>97</sup> H., “Inconvenient Situation”, *Izmirli*, Dec. 4, 1909, No: 9, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup> *Izmirli*, Nov. 27, 1909, No: 8, p. 59.

council of Erzurum established a committee to take care of the orphans of Adana massacres.<sup>99</sup> Again in Erzurum within two months after the massacres 28000 *kurush* were collected to help the victims from both in the city and villages to be sent to the Patriarchate.<sup>100</sup> Likewise, a committee of six persons was formed in Sivas to organize assistance to the Adana survivors, raise funds, and collect garments for them.<sup>101</sup> In Izmit 10,000 *kurush* was gathered for Adana victims.<sup>102</sup>

Most of the Armenians, especially but not only *Tashnak* circles, evaluated Adana massacres as “Abdulhamid’s last intrigue”.<sup>103</sup> Under his leadership, according to their perception, religious-reactionary forces and internal enemies of the constitution tried to negate the Revolution by abolishing constitution and parliament once again. However, they were also complaining of the government and the CUP for tolerating the mob during the massacres and not treating the case afterwards seriously on legal and political ground. One mournful article sincerely expresses the psychology of the Armenians after the massacres.

“Is the government more powerful or the mob, organized power or crowd? The answer is simple. Then if the government is powerful why does not use its power to prevent violent actions? The policy of exterminating Armenians has been continuing for half a century especially for last 25-30 years during the reign of red Abdulhamid that merciless, remorseless, godless, anthropomorphous, cannibal monster. But also after him...still silence, indifference...

Unbelievable, are MASSACRE and CONSTITUTION compatible with each other, could they be consistent? They preach about fraternity, justice, equality,

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<sup>99</sup> *Haratch*, Feb. 2, 1910, No: 9, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> *Haratch*, June 12, 1909, No: 4, p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> *Antranik*, May 16, 1909, No: 18, p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 10, 1910, No: 5, p. 56.

<sup>103</sup> As a matter of fact, an anonymous Armenian booklet was published after the March 31 incident with this title: “Abdulhamid’s Last Intrigue”; *Apt-iwl-Hamiti Verjin Khaghě*. (K. Polis: Tpagrich’-Hratarakich’ O. Arzuman, 1909).

and freedom but how, through massacre, carnage, or barbarism? Oh my God! But the Armenian, that faithful nation of the Bible, accepted that sacred invitation of fraternity by sublime nobleness of Christianity; and would work for the improvement of the constitutional regime by forgetting the black and red memories of the past that are carved on his courageous and sorrowful chest by those who today preach fraternity. But alas, unfortunately they found themselves again deceived and once again 20.000-30.000 Armenians were killed in Cilicia and vicinity...

Even the Son of God drank the glass of bitterness for once but you [Armenian]...who knows how many times?...

Till now there has been nothing except diplomatic hypocritical games and what has been done is contrary to what has been said under the nose of civilized world"<sup>104</sup>

Another author from Tokat also attributes the Adana massacres to *sharia* seeking people and class of *softas* and *imams* who were Abdulhamid's satellites and bemoans poignantly the bloody fate of Armenians in Turkey as proved by Adana massacres once more: "One irreversible curses of this life is being born in this bloody country that is named Turkey, a perfect synonym for hell. One is regretful that he, as a human being, lives in the middle of these savages." Later he addresses the CUP:

"Did you, members of the CUP, see the horrible result of chauvinism? Did you see the harm of loosening the leash of ill-natured *softas*? Did you see the outcome of keeping old bureaucrats at their office? And did you see the fierce result of just saying that Turkey is reformed but doing nothing?" Now, what should have been done was to punish these *softas* severely who stained the name of Turkey in the civilized world. "If you are real constitutionalist you have to bring the organizers of the massacres to the court, especially Adil and [governor] Cevat, and hang them as examples".<sup>105</sup>

Patriarch Turian, who was discontent with the government's way of handling and investigating the massacres, resigned to protest the indifference shown to his petitions and demands about the inquiry of Adana events. This resignation increased

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<sup>104</sup> Hayazad, "Grievance and Hosanna", *Antranik*, May 9, 1909, No: 17, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Zrehig, "The Land of Blood", *Antranik*, May 9, 1909, No: 17, p. 3, 4.

the uneasiness and ambiguity among Armenians caused by the massacres.<sup>106</sup> On the first anniversary of the constitution and almost three months after the Adana massacres a commentator from Sivas sums up the psychology of Armenians well. He says that during the *ancien regime* it had been easier to bear all the difficulties and catastrophes because they had a hope for a bright future. However, after the Revolution which was supposedly marked the beginning of that bright future, and after seeing that there was no difference between old and new it became more difficult to cope with the feeling of disappointment since nothing remained in the future to be expected. However, he says that he was not hopeless about the future of the country; on the contrary, he was quite hopeful unless doubt and mutual mistrustfulness among communities prevailed. Especially Turks should have overcome their doubts about non-Muslim communities. If they took one step further to the fraternity Armenians would take three. He concludes that chauvinist attitudes would be harmful for everyone, every community.<sup>107</sup>

After the massacres Armenian political parties also had some hesitation and indecisiveness about their attitude towards the CUP. Some Armenians like *Hnchaks* were strongly against cooperation with the CUP; others like *Tashnaks* were divided. While a group within *Tashnaks* suggested immediate brake up of the relations with the CUP a larger group argued that this cooperation was consistent with the interests of the Armenians. Krikor Zohrab, though not a *Tashnak* one of the Istanbul deputies of the parliament, said:

"The Muslims could not easily leave their age old idea that they govern the country. For changing this it needs time and effort...Ittihadists are liberals like us...No one can know the

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<sup>106</sup> H., "Inconvenient Situation", *Izmirli*, Dec. 4, 1909, No: 9, p. 66.

<sup>107</sup> K. Metzadurian, "Long Live Ottoman Constitution! Long Live Freedom! Long Live Solidarity", *Antranik*, July 11, 1909, No: 27-28, p. 1.

defects of this party better than me but this is not a reason not to accept its liberal basis. Moreover, is there any more libertarian party we can collaborate? The administrations of *Ahrar* and *Mutedil Hurriyetperveren* Party are full of reactionary and religious elements. Also, let us not forget that the CUP is in power. If our ideals do not lead us to cooperate with them our interests do. One cannot progress in politics with only emotions."<sup>108</sup>

The debate among the *Tashnaks* about the continuation of the cooperation with the CUP was also reflected in the fifth congress of the party in August 1909. One group suggested to terminate the cooperation immediately with the CUP which was unreliable since it was supporting the enemies of Armenian nation whereas another group, though agreeing with the negative comments about the CUP, argued that total break of the relations with the CUP was against the interest of Armenian nation since this would risk the half-fulfilled constitutional rights and play into the hands of reactionary forces. As a result of harsh discussions the second group outweighed. In the final declaration of the congress it was stated that the collaboration with the CUP would be practiced through the commission consisting of two representatives from each party. As a matter of fact, in September 1909 Mithat Şükrü and Dr. Nazım from the CUP and Armen Garo and Vahan Papazian from the ARF negotiated and agreed on a protocol that says:

"1. Parties will work together to employ the constitution and provide social improvements without avoiding any sacrifice.

2. They will cooperate against the possibility of repetition of reactionary movement.

3. Since the ultimate aim of the cooperation is the unity of Ottoman fatherland, *parties will work to practically dispel within the public opinion that false story inherited from the despotic regime that the Armenians strive for independence.*

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<sup>108</sup> Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, 178, 179; cited from Vahan Papazian, *Im Husheri [My Memoirs]* (Cairo, 1957), 123–130.

4. Parties agree on expanding the administrative rights of provinces as the assurance the development and progress of the Ottoman fatherland.

5. The CUP and the ARF evaluated the events of March 31 and Adana massacres as a warning and decided to collaborate."<sup>109</sup>

As all these show, *despite negative feelings about Adana massacres it did not completely terminate the hopes pinned on the Revolution by Armenians once and for all since that incident was largely regarded as a counter-revolutionary and reactionary movement although the responsibility of the CUP was not ignored. On the contrary, its suppression was seen as an achievement of revolutionary forces.* After the Adana massacres the official organ of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), *Troshak*, advised Armenians to be temperate and avoid any act that could be perceived as revenge:

“In these heavy days the responsibility of [Armenian] leading circles and youth is big. It requires an endless discretion and utmost circumspection...Be careful against unreasonable masses that are ready to perceive your each gesture wrongly and interpret it contrary to your sincerity. We have to give even simple cultural and humane messages with utmost caution. The word “revenge” should never come out of especially active youngsters’ mouth.”<sup>110</sup>

It seems that not only *Tashnaks* but also a large portion of the Ottoman Armenians *chose* to believe in the constitutional regime because they sensed that *they had no chance but to trust “the Turks”* and the government and hope for a better future. One commentator says that Turks are not natural born killers but the Hamidian regime of 33 years drove them to kill Armenians; and now constitutional regime might have educated them to live with others peacefully. But the new regime had no magic

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<sup>109</sup> D.M. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology Under Ottoman Rule 1908-1914* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 43–47; Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, 69–73. Italics are added.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in *Haratch*, June 19, 1909, No: 6, p. 2.

wand; improvement would come gradually.<sup>111</sup> Another article appeared just after the Adana massacres in the same non-partisan Armenian newspaper of Sivas made a similar call of temperance like *Tashnak* declaration. The author says that they finally had a constitution that bestowed them freedom. But this freedom should not be limitless or for nothing. Constitutional law was the limit itself:

“We should not use the freedoms given us excessively. We should be sensible, prudent, and temperate in all of our acts. Extremism and daring march is harmful and detrimental for especially us, Armenians. For a nation that has been suffering and vanishing economically, carefulness and temperance are the most vital features. Let us show that we are worth of freedom by using it for good... We have been shouting for nine months, it is enough... it is enough to applause, yell, cheer and fire arms. [Hereafter] Let’s work calmly... The most essential condition of benefiting constitutional freedom is hard work and harmonious collaboration... *The fate of our nation is so commanded that we should live agreeably and gladly with the Turks and also other communities living in Turkey... Only through this way that we can have the best position in the economic and moral life of this beautiful country.*”<sup>112</sup>

From where massacres happened also came a similar voice. An Armenian lawyer from Adana, Garabed Chalian, also emphasizes the importance of the harmony with other groups in the pamphlet he wrote in which he explains the Adana events. He says in that text: "Since we know that our national interest and happiness are dependent on living in unity with our Turkish citizens and the protection of our lives and rights are possible with their goodwill, we are not hesitant to declare that their helping hand is the only support we can rely on". Chalian states that after the re-promulgation of the constitutional regime the Armenian parties left the aim of armed revolution and accepted the principles of national sovereignty and the unity of

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<sup>111</sup> *Antranik*, Dec. 12, 1909, No: 50, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> K. Metzadurian, “The Boons of the Constitution”, *Antranik*, May 23, 1909, No: 19, p. 2. Italics are added.

Ottoman country, started working to strengthen the new regime. In this endeavor they tried to be "the right hand of *new Turks*".<sup>113</sup>

Another Armenian author interprets the March 31 and Adana incidents as a plot to hinder the cooperation between Armenians and "their big brother" Turks. However, according to the author, new Turkey showed signs that she would punish severely those who were responsible of massacring Armenians. For the first time, gallows were installed in Turkey for such people. However, nobody could blame Armenians for not being easy-going believers. What this author advises, like others, is again patience and calmness a bit more.<sup>114</sup>

All these show that opinion leaders of the Armenian community made a conscious effort to be optimistic after Adana and expand this sanguinity to Ottoman Armenian society. For this, they tried to offset the negative effect of the massacres and keep the people's hope and morale high. For example, the publication of the *Yeprad* College of Harput, whose almost 90 % of students and faculty was constituted of Armenians, writes:

"Before, and more than anything else, we expect the establishment of harmony and fraternity on a stable and strong basis. These are not impossible, but time is required. Let's wait until the parliament makes its program, and the government works to realize the expected reforms. Let's not be impatient. The damage caused over the years cannot be cured in one day."<sup>115</sup>

"We are one and a half year old babies who are walking further day by day. Our hopes have been extinguished many times in the past. Now we are hopeful again. We hope that this country will recover from its

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<sup>113</sup> Relayed by Abdurrahman Şeref, *Son Vak'ânüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, 116, 120, 121. Italics are added.

<sup>114</sup> Kr. Der Aprahamian, "Shorts notes: first and second period of freedom", *Antranik*, April 3, 1910, No: 59, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Editorial, *Yeprad*, 1 January 1910, No: 5, 71.



illnesses and that the communities, in harmony, will show the aliens that they are the master of their own country and have the right to remain so. We still hope that the officials of the government will gradually become better, and that Turkish parties will not attempt to take the constitution back from our hands. On the contrary, we expect them to improve it. Our hope is still strong.”<sup>116</sup>

Also a commentator draws an interesting analogy between Armenians and the Three Wise Men of the Bible in order to depict their situation and psychology. Like the Three Wise Men had waited for the star heralding the birth of the Savior for centuries the Armenians also had waited, in the darkness of “slavery”, for the star leading to their salvation and rebirth. That waiting had been long but finally the star was born by the constitution for which their forefathers had searched the sky for six centuries. Their grandchildren became the happy witness of its bright rays that would enlighten the way of rebirth. So, they started to walk on that way which was still very thorny. As a matter of fact, a time came when that star was covered in darkness, a storm exploded. Adana massacres happened and destroyed their hopes. But they resisted, recovered and stood up to resume their walk on the way of rebirth.<sup>117</sup>

What Abbot observed at that time among Armenians is also consistent with these expressions taken from first-hand articulations. He says "The Armenians had been taught by bitter experience that they could neither achieve national rehabilitation by their own efforts nor hope for any practical help from the platonic sympathy of the West. All that they could reasonably expect to gain by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was an exchange of the Turkish for the Russian yoke; and that did not seem to them a prospect of overwhelming attractiveness. The Armenian revolutionary committees, therefore, hastened to make common cause

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<sup>116</sup> Editorial, *Yeprad*, 15 January 1910, No: 6, 103.

<sup>117</sup> Hovan Moskofian, “Rebirth”, *Antranik*, Jan. 9, 1910, No: 54, p. 1.

with the Young Turks, frankly expressing the conviction that the salvation of their nationality lay in the integrity and reform of the common fatherland".<sup>118</sup>

### A Positive Sign

In the Constitution of 1876 the sultan still had a very powerful position. He had the authority to appoint many offices and committees including the cabinet. He was not accountable, but his permit was required to draft a law.<sup>119</sup> This was contrary to the new understanding of politics and governing since the position of the sultan was anti-democratic. Some essential constitutional changes were being discussed after the Revolution to make the regime more democratic. Finally, the extensive constitutional changes, realized 13 months after the Revolution on August 21, 1909, made the regime more representative and democratic at least on paper. In this package 21 articles were changed, one was abolished, and three new ones were added. Most of the changes aimed to narrow the authority of the sultan whereas increase the power of the executive and legislative branches. The symbolic reflection of this transformation was seen in the article 3 which mandated the sultan to take an oath of loyalty to the constitution and sharia and fatherland and nation in the parliament.<sup>120</sup> A more concrete and practical change to narrow the authority of the sultan was that he, thereafter, could not choose the member of the cabinet but approve the list determined by the *sadrizam*. He also could propose laws only through cabinet. He

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<sup>118</sup> Abbott, *Turkey in Transition*, 36.

<sup>119</sup> T.Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye 'de Siyasal Gelişmeler (1876-1938): Kanun-i Esasi Ve Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003), 11, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Cem Eroğul, "1908 Devrimi'ni İzleyen Anayasa Değişiklikleri," in *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi*, ed. Sina. Akşin, Sarp. Balcı, and Barış Ünlü, *Yüzüncü Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 92.

could not abolish the *Meclis-i Mebusan* whenever he wanted, it might have been in a very extraordinary situation depending on the approval of *Meclis-i Ayan*.<sup>121</sup> In addition, the approval of the parliament became necessary for all treaties with other countries.

Second set of changes was related to liberties. Not only groundless punishment but also groundless arrest was banned. However, acts contrary to the sharia were counted as a reason for arrest and punishment. Censorship on press was also banned as illegal, the liberty of meeting and organization was recognized.<sup>122</sup>

Every member of *Mebusan* and *Ayan* was given the right to propose laws on the condition that the proposal had to be accepted in both of the houses and later presented to the approval of the sultan. He had to either approve or send it back to the parliament. If the two thirds of the parliament insisted on the draft the sultan had to approve it.<sup>123</sup>

#### Source of doubt: legal and governmental acts of the CUP

As a result of these amendments, political regime of the country started to look more like parliamentarism since the power of the parliament increased and the government became accountable to the parliament rather than the sultan. However, in 1912 and 1916 new amendments in the constitution widened the limits of the authority of the sultan again, who was enabled to dismiss the Chamber and call for new elections through a little excuse. “These changes gave the CUP a more efficient means to

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 94, 99.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 97.

institute favorable reforms through “temporary” laws (when the Chamber was not in session) and through the sultan”.<sup>124</sup> Even before these changes, the attitude and policies of the CUP caused worry and complaints on the side of opposition as it was blamed for establishing its oppressive regime by using the tactics of the old regime such as nepotism, establishing a spy network or putting fear into hearts. As early as the first elections after the Revolution, there were some complaints that the CUP supporters dominated the Electoral Commissions at district level whose job was to finalize the lists of electors. According to the complaints, these commissions promoted unfair inclusion and exclusion; moreover, some of them arranged the electoral districts in such a way to minimize the effect of non-Muslim votes.<sup>125</sup>

Additionally, in February 1909 when grand vizier Kamil Pasha was dismissed at the end of a vote of confidence in the parliament initiated by the CUP because of his attempt to change the ministers of war and navy, the Committee was accused of manipulating even threatening the deputies.<sup>126</sup> Instances in which the CUP applied oppressive measures are numerous. One of them is especially telling about how the Committee tried to monopolize political power and shape public opinion. When the Mohammedan Association (*Ittihad-i Muhammedi*), before it was closed down as one of the culprits of the March 31 uprising, wanted to multiply its seals to distribute to its branches it was told by the warden of seal guild that they had to have a permit first from the CUP according to the directions of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>127</sup> The

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<sup>124</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 269.

<sup>125</sup> Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, 190, 191.

<sup>126</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 158, 169, 170.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

Committee, although it did not have any legal authority, desired to control the entrance of new actors into political and social domain as potential rivals.

After the suppression of the “counter-revolutionary” action of the March 31, by the summer of 1909 some doubts and worries about the future, mainly based on such action of the CUP, started to be articulated frequently by some Armenians as well as others. In fact, after the attempt of counterrevolution that bolstered the CUP’s status as the guardian of the constitutional regime, the restrictive measures on civil liberties became heavier as it became more difficult to oppose such measures given “the proven threat of reactionary forces”. As Abbott, as a first-hand witness, confirms, although the Christian elements greeted the constitution very joyfully as a liberating power, within a year they started to doubt that it was merely a tool at the hand of the Young Turks to maintain and strengthen the Turkish domination and supremacy. One of the most convincing indicators of this was the manner in which the CUP directed government, legislation, and parliamentary elections. He observes that even before the first anniversary of the Revolution the complaints from every corner of the country that the CUP established its own tyranny instead of the Hamidian one started to be heard.<sup>128</sup> For instance, although Greek elites, after a short hesitation, gave support to the Young Turks changed their attitude upon seeing the authoritarian measures of the Unionists. Eventually, sixteen Greek deputies in the first parliament after the Revolution formed an organization called Greek Political Association in opposition to the CUP. However, there were also some Greek deputies among remaining eight who were closer to the Unionist policies.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Abbott, *Turkey in Transition*, 47, 86.

<sup>129</sup> Vangelis Kechriotis, “The Modernisation of the Empire and the ‘Community Privileges’: Greek Responses to the Young Turk Policies’,” in *The State and the Subaltern Modernisation, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran*, ed. Touraj. Atabaki, Library of Modern Middle East Studies ;66

As a legal tool of their political domination, on July 16, 1909 Ittihadists issued a Press Law by which, though censorship was not formally established again, it became possible for the government to close those newspapers, which made publishing “against the security of state and provoking rebellion” until the court made a final decision about them. The government might have banned the circulation of those newspapers published abroad into the Empire<sup>130</sup>, just like Abdulhamid had done before. In addition, heavy punishments in jail or fines in money were foreseen for those editors who did not obey the rules.

The restrictions on public gatherings were also a source of uneasiness. Although new law stated that all Ottomans were allowed to hold meetings without warranty if they are unarmed, practical preconditions were so excessive that it became almost impossible to realize a meeting. For example, organizers had to have a permit from the government at least two days before the meeting and at least one of them had to reside where the meeting would be held. Furthermore, meetings were banned within three kilometers of upper and lower houses, and the palace which made having a meeting in Istanbul actually difficult.<sup>131</sup>

What also irritated the Armenians and other ethno-religious groups was the Law of Associations which was discussed and accepted in the parliament in July-August 1909. It, besides putting societies and political parties under strict control of the government, formally prohibited the foundation of associations and political parties on the basis of ethnic or religious identities. This faced strong opposition

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(London: I. B. Tauris in association with The International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 2007), 61, 62.

<sup>130</sup> Hamza Çakır and Hakan Aydın, “İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi Basın Sansürü,” in *İkinci Meşrutiyet Devrinde Basın ve Siyaset*, ed. Hakan Aydın (Konya: Palet Yayınları, 2010), 251.

<sup>131</sup> Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran*, 265.

from Armenian, Greek, Arab and Albanian deputies in the parliament. For example, Hristo Dalchef said that this article would cause conflict because it aimed to Turkify other elements. Also, Nazaret Daghavarian, deputy of Sivas, claimed that this article would encourage people to establish secret organizations just like during the Hamidian regime<sup>132</sup> since they would be prevented from expressing themselves freely. Similarly, chief editor of *Haratch* newspaper in Erzurum qualifies this decision as ominous, narrow-minded and callow because it means that, if it was carried out, Armenian, Albanian, Arabian, Kurdish etc. associations would be prosecuted by the government. Even during the nastiest days of his tyranny Abdulhamid could have not end these parties by force. Banning national parties would force them to underground hidden activities. Also this means that only those parties that were happy with the status quo would continue to exist while other would be closed down. But this was impossible because these parties had existed for years; they were inevitable/natural result of social conditions. He claimed that no order, no law would be able to kill the natural articulations of life. Prohibition and persecution of the free expression of ideas, and restricting politics were the ways of the old regime that constitutional Turkey should have not followed.<sup>133</sup> Despite all this opposition the article was accepted and the government had the opportunity to close all associations and parties that it did not like. This became a threat like a sword of Damocles over the head of the opposition parties to be used whenever the government wanted.

The CUP's policy of language and education was another source of uneasiness and worry since it developed more militant attitude to make Turkish the

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<sup>132</sup> Hocaoglu, *II. Meşrutiyette İktidar Muhalefet İlişkileri 1908- 1913*, 149, 150.

<sup>133</sup> Yervant, "Prohibition or freedom", *Haratch*, July 17, 1909, No: 14, p. 1; Yervant, "Fourth Article", *Haratch*, July 21, 1909, No: 15, p. 1.

dominant language in education and administration although Turkish had been already specified as the official language in the 1876 Constitution. This policy created discomfort in the provincial areas such as Albania or Arab regions as an indicator of the CUP's assimilationist policy.<sup>134</sup> Ottoman Greek community got so worried about the educational policy of the CUP that almost one and half year after the Revolution Greek Patriarch Ioachim III and the members of the Holy Synod and National Mixed Council, which was an internal administrative organ of the community, published some memoranda in which they referred to the “ages old privileges” of the Patriarchate, also recognized and protected by the Ottoman state until then, to take care of the education in full autonomy of its community. They also underlined the necessity of keeping the education of Christians since a Muslim state should not undertake the education of Christian children, which would inevitably bring about the cultural assimilation of Christian communities.<sup>135</sup> This kind of long term structural policies and actions in education distressed also Armenians and made them suspicious. Indeed, G. H. Sinanian from Erzurum comments that these policies incited mutual doubts among communities which became a barrier on the way of peaceful cohabitation. Thus, the principles of liberty, fraternity, equality and justice that spread by the constitution were merely words yet, could not be applied actually because the nations of Turkey each had their own doubts. For example, many people still had doubts about the Armenians and regarded them as a separatist group. He objects this view and says that it had been very understandable that in the days of old

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<sup>134</sup> Hasan. Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 91; Ryan. Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912-1923*, Oxford Studies in Modern European History (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15, 16.

<sup>135</sup> Kechriotis, “The Modernisation of the Empire and the ‘Community Privileges’: Greek Responses to the Young Turk Policies’,” 62, 63.



regime Armenians who had been oppressed, plundered would work for revolution. But they sincerely greeted the constitution and expected much from it. Unfortunately, however, one year later it gifted almost nothing to Armenians as well as other Christians. He contends that Turks, full of doubts against Armenians and other Christians, wanted to enjoy the constitution only on their own. One important point of mistrust between Turks and Christians was the ‘privileges’<sup>136</sup> of Christians. Turks wanted to eliminate these privileges whose guarantor was Europe. According to him, Christians of Turkey would not want to leave these privileges since they did not have any trust on the state and Turks/Muslims. The massacres in Cilicia strengthened their mistrust since besides killings forced conversion to Islam was also seen. These ‘privileges’ could not be abolished because they were the guarantees of preserving religious differences.<sup>137</sup> So, he regards the effort to make Turkish dominant over other languages, which was another result of the doubt about the Armenians and other Christians, as an attempt to end these privileges. However, he warns that the previous examples of Russia, Austria, and Germany that wanted to assimilate the people living under their state did not work and brought about only bloodshed.

“Is it not natural that Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians and others love their tongue as much as Turks love theirs? All nations give their life but not their language; do not want to lose their existence. This must be known as such.

Is it possible to hinder the development of a nation that has life and energy? Bury a seed into the soil and put a rock on it. The life in the seed will bypass the rock and burgeon; rock cannot prevent the seed from growing. Germany, Austria, Russia put rocks on other nations but people proceed, improve, and preserve their existence despite this. Same will happen to the nations/communities of Turkey.”

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<sup>136</sup> Sinanian himself uses this word in quotation. So, this shows that he does not see these as privileges but rights.

<sup>137</sup> G. H. H. Sinanian, “Unfounded Doubts”, *Haratch*, July 14, 1909, No: 13, p. 2.

He questions why still Turks look at Armenians with doubt and assumes that this was because of the existence of Armenian revolutionary parties. However, there are similar Turkish parties that did not face such doubts. Another reason might have been that Armenians provided arms and defend themselves in Adana. The author asks,

“Is self-defense a crime? Is it a crime to arm against reactionaries for self-defense?...

Armenian does not have separatist aims and will never have if the constitution is applied perfectly and real fraternity and equality reigns among all nations/communities of Turkey. Today there are many nations in America including even Armenians. Why do any of them not think to secede? (because) the American state never aims to chain and ruin the language, and religion of the communities... If Turkey wants to eliminate all separatist aims she should actually implement equality, fraternity, and liberty.

...

When Turks, in doubts, try to chain the mother tongue and religion of Christians it is not natural that the Christians doubt that these are the actualization of Pan-Islamist ideas?

What will be the result of these doubts? Turkey cannot be built with doubts. Broken hearts and old bloody wounds cannot be healed by doubts, on the contrary new wounds are made.

Thus leave doubts replace them with mutual trust.”<sup>138</sup>

Another analysis from *Haratch* newspaper in Erzurum summarizes Armenians’ mentality and psychology almost one year after the Revolution so well that it is worth quote at length:

“Once, our Turkish compatriots had not even wanted to hear negative critics about Turkey.

When Armenians’ voice complaining of bloody atmosphere of Hamidian barbarism reached Europe and attracted the attention of civilized world some of Turkish leading intellectual circles expressed their anger and wrote antagonistic articles against Armenians. They said, ‘You

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

betray the country because you seek the help of foreigners, make unnecessary noise’.

But years passed and the pressure of tyranny started to be felt on also Muslim element, Abdulhamid poisoned the peaceful life of all nations through his puppets. Whole country started to bleed; after that point Turkish patriots confessed the evil and started to complain to whole world.

They were convinced that Armenians were not traitors but real patriots because they wanted, by the flag of revolution, to demolish the Hamidian tyranny and instead establish the security of life and property which is the prerequisite of happiness of each country, each fatherland.

By this persuasion Turkish patriots kissed Armenians, blessed the memory of fallen Armenian heroes, and praised the equality and fraternity of nations. And months passed; Armenian, Greek, Arab and Albanian wanted to enjoy what is called equality, and see the fruits of new order. But what [happened]? Again raised the poisonous doubt against nations of different race and faith; again echoed the conservative blame:

‘You want to decompose the fatherland, work for separation, you traitors’

And new ways come to the scene to suppress these ‘traitors’.

The government is putting off taking soldiers from Christians...

The parliament issued law to expel mother tongue from our schools to make Turkish functional.

Turkish press demands the elimination of Christian ‘privileges’.

...

All these are done for the fatherland’s sake.

They aim to repress, restrain those who are not Turk, are not Muslim within circles in order to increase the power of the country.

Is it possible to reach happy ends through these policies?

Absolutely not.

Repression and persecution produce only bitterness that is absolutely undesirable for the harmony of communities.

Greek Patriarch is expressing the uneasiness of Greek community by threat of resigning.

Similarly, Armenian patriarch and deputies articulate their complaint.

...

These are not good signs in any way; the power of the fatherland does not increase where society has such a mood.<sup>139</sup>

In sum, the CUP started to cause a great amount of uneasiness and apprehension a year after the Revolution among a considerable part of the Armenians by its actions and policies that were perceived restrictive, prejudiced and assimilationist although this did not bring about a total break with the CUP.

#### Source of Doubt: Daily Illegalities and Cruelties

Besides the CUP's mentality of government what also made Armenians suspicious about the future of the constitutional regime was the lack of rule of law and justice which crystalized at the treatment they faced by both local despots and governmental officials. One can observe through the pages of Anatolian Armenian press that the number of assaults on Armenians' life and property increased again almost one year after the Revolution. Attackers seem to have hesitated and paused for a while after the revolution but upon seeing that nothing changed much in the way of government they resumed assault and extortion. The expressions by one of these attackers in a skirmish in Erzinçan are revealing since it shows how constitution was perceived by some Muslims. In the Armenian neighborhood of the town a group of Muslim drunk "villains" fired their arms into the air and teased an Armenian man on the street. When the latter opposed one of the men, Kel Salih, wounded him. The others prevented him from giving more harm. Salih shouted as "I am going to kill him *for*

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<sup>139</sup> Yervant, "Power of the Country", *Haratch*, June 23, 1909, No: 7, p. 1.

*an example (ibret-i alem için)*”, and *insulted the constitution*.<sup>140</sup> What was the relation of the constitution with such an ordinary street fight? Why did that man refer to the constitution? Because they evaluated the constitution as something benefiting the Christians/Armenians. They could not bear to see Armenians as their equals and articulate, assertive, self-defending subjects. Thus, even a seemingly mundane street fight might have become a matter of politics; and this event gives a clue to grasp that the constitution did not produce the feelings of only fraternity but also envy and enmity among some Muslim circles against Christians.

State officials like governors, sub-governors, police chiefs etc. were either collaborating with the perpetrators or at least connoting them. This kind of acts made Armenians question the difference between old and new periods and asked “what differs if everything continues like this”. As early as July 1909 an Armenian, describing the situation in Bulanık, Erzurum, says that nothing changed after the constitution since same cruelties, murders, and injustice continued. “Same reactionary people” continued to rule. The sub-governor of Bulanık, being 80 years old, actually submitted the administration to the police chief who, in alliance with Kurdish *aghas*, was repressing the working people especially Armenians. The reporter contends that these officials were acting against equality that the constitution had brought about. Armenians sent a complaining telegram to Moush to higher officials but they did not receive any reply. As a result of this attitude by the local government 8 more Armenians were killed even after the constitution.<sup>141</sup> One Armenian author, writing in April 1912, sarcastically states that the constitution did not stop the assaults of Kurds and *derebeys* whereas Istanbul still was forming

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<sup>140</sup> *Haratch*, Feb. 12, 1910, No: 12, p. 4.

<sup>141</sup> M. Pet, “The state in Bulanık”, *Haratch*, July 28, 1909, No: 17, p. 2, 3.

inspection commissions to understand whether “sweet-tempered and modest Ottomans like Kurds kill people, steal property, kidnap girls and women.”<sup>142</sup> For example, in a single issue of *Iris* newspaper of June 1911 four different incidents from Harput, Siirt, and Tokat are reported in which Armenians were either robbed, beaten, or even in some instances killed. These assaults make the newspaper ask whether there would be an end to the agony and “martyrdom” of poor Armenians, especially those living in the deep towns of provinces.<sup>143</sup> The letter sent by the Prelate of Moush (Daron) Bishop Nerses Kharakhanian to Echmiadzin, the center of the supreme authority of the Armenian Church, on Oct. 12, 1912 summarizes the situation succinctly. He complained about the oppression and exploitation by *multezims* and officials; and he says

"If one dares to complain to the government he faces heavier punishments. Prosecutor, judge, officer are all *multezim*'s relatives or friends. Aside from this fact, if there is a Christian plaintiff against a Muslim the result is obvious...they demand threefold or fourfold tax...They even demand tax from deaths ...Turkish gendarmerie was not a less evil for peasants than bandits. They beat, torture, exploit, take their horses' food for free. They especially get angry when they come to collect soldiers and see that they are not ready...When an inspector comes upon complaints they always acquit gendarmerie who, after this encouragement, continue their oppressions even in a harsher manner.

Before constitution they, in order to legitimize persecution and plunder, showed the Armenians as suspicious. It seems that the Turks also today try to follow the same way (even) when the Armenians are the most loyal subject and perform military duty for the protection of the fatherland."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> M. Varjabedian , “Satisfaction...On Paper”, *Iris*, April 15, 1912, No: 1, p. 9.

<sup>143</sup> *Iris*, June 1, 1911, No: 6, p. 7-9.

<sup>144</sup> Lewon Ch'ormisean, *Hamapatker Arewmtahayots' Mēk Daru Patmut'ean* (Pēyruṭ': Impr. G. Doniguan, 1972), 131.

This complaint has almost no difference from the articulation of the Armenians during the reign of Abdulhamid. Shortly, four and a half years after the Revolution “business got back to the usual”, especially in the Anatolian provinces. Therefore, as a result of the CUP’s mentality of government and daily pressure on their life and property the despair among Ottoman Armenians expanded and deepened towards the end of 1912. They started to give up their hope that the country would be democratized when they considered the political choices that the CUP made. It eventually preferred a Turkist, centralist ideology in governing the country which was not consistent with what Ottoman Armenians anticipated for themselves and for the country. Moreover, the CUP applied oppressive and violent methods in the implementation of their policies. Although constitutional changes in 1909 had made the parliament more powerful as a representative body, when the CUP saw that its power in the parliament got weaker and an opposition started to grow it attempted to make another constitutional change in 1911 which would make the abolishment of the parliament easier. But it could not provide the required majority. Afterwards, it created a governmental crisis at the end of which the sultan abolished the parliament. 1912 elections for the new parliament are remembered as “Elections with Stick” (*Sopalı Seçimler*) due to oppressive methods applied by the CUP.<sup>145</sup> For example, martial law declared after the mutiny of March 31 was still in force during the elections which was used as a pretext to suppress opposition parties and restrict their electoral actions.<sup>146</sup> Although in the new parliament the CUP passed the constitutional amendment which made dismissal of the parliament easier, before its approval by the sultan another group of army officers (*Halaskar Zabitan*) forced the

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<sup>145</sup> Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Gelişmeler (1876-1938): Kanun-i Esasi Ve Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 1:22.

<sup>146</sup> Fevzi Demir, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Meclis-i Mebusan Seçimleri* (Ankara İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2007), 179, 180.

CUP to leave the government. After the CUP captured the government again through the coup on 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1913, it promulgated that change which remarkably weaken the parliament vis-à-vis the parliament in the beginning of 1914.<sup>147</sup> As Tunaya says the CUP created a monopoly in politics and blocked every way of legitimate change of government, used democratic institutions, such as using the majority power in the parliament, to create an oppressive oligarchy and make undemocratic laws. The CUP turned government into “a castle that could not be captured”.<sup>148</sup>

The start of the Balkan Wars in the fall of 1912 and the shock created by the quick defeat intensified and radicalized the CUP’s Turkist ideology more and Ittihadist people started to hurry for its implementation. During and after the Balkan Wars they became militarist so overtly that military drills entered even into public schools and moreover they created some paramilitary organizations like *Güç Dernekleri* (Associations of Force).<sup>149</sup> Radicalization was spread under the leadership of the CUP which “learned some lessons” from the Balkan Wars. One, following Bora Isyar, can identify three sets of thoughts raising this radicalism. The first was the narratives about how Turks/Muslims were treated in the Balkan states before and during the war. How the Turks had been isolated, discriminated and ultimately massacred in the Balkans was frequently repeated. Second set of thought was about how internal Christians contributed to the victory of the Balkan states and so that betrayed the Ottoman state and brotherhood. Third was the claim that the Balkan states fought with a racial-national consciousness and the zeal which was the main

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<sup>147</sup> Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Gelişmeler (1876-1938): Kanun-i Esasi Ve Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 1:23.

<sup>148</sup> Tunaya, *Hürriyet’in İlanı*, 29, 64, 65.

<sup>149</sup> Alkan, “II. Meşrutiyet’te Eğitim, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Milliyetçilik, Militarizm veya ‘Militer Türk-İslam Sentezi’,” 68, 69.



reason behind their success in the war. Racial unity was seen as a 'natural' condition and accordingly the unity based on it was a firm one whereas Ottomanism which the Ottoman state had been trying to achieve was an artificial, and thus a weak unity. These views normalized and legitimized a racial version of nation.<sup>150</sup> The anti-Christian atmosphere, rising during and after the war and finding its expression in boycotts and job dismissals, did not make much differentiation between Bulgarians, Greek and Armenians. Public opinion easily directed its hate caused by the atrocities against Muslims in the Balkans to the Christians of Anatolia. As a consequence of this sudden rift, and mental break-up, a political and social climate, which emphasized and privileged Turkish culture and identity over others, rose. "...the Turk as a citizen was constructed; its being was legitimated through various scientific knowledges (sic.) and Turkishness was proven to be the proper and essential definition of citizenship. Within the just space of two years, Turkism established itself as the dominant discourse of citizenship. What had been impossible five years earlier was in full motion: the institutionalization of Turkism claiming to be the true mode of citizenship, invalidating Ottomanism."<sup>151</sup>

This atmosphere speeded up the vicious cycle in the relations between the Armenians (as well as other non-Muslims) and the CUP/state: as the CUP got more suspicious of the Armenians it implemented more Turkist, centralist, and oppressive policies, as it implemented such policies the Armenians got alarmed and voiced their demands more loudly and fiercely which fed the CUP's doubt about them.

Generally speaking, although there had already been some centralist, Turkist expressions and policies on the side of the CUP and some worries and hesitations on

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<sup>150</sup> Bora Isyar, "The Origins of Turkish Republican Citizenship: The Birth of Race," *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 3 (July 1, 2005): 345.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

the side of the Armenians before the eruption of the Balkan Wars, this war signifies a psychological rupture during and after which dialogue between the Armenian organizations and the CUP became much harder. Moreover, by the Balkan Wars the country entered into a kind of political turbulence in which coups, assassinations, wars and even ethnic cleanings came one after another until the end of 1922. In such a course of events it is very difficult to observe calm projections about the future of the country or discussions about ideal political regime since most of the people saw themselves in a life-or-death struggle. Therefore, the period started by the Balkan Wars might be handled as another chapter in the history of the second constitutional period since the psychology of all actors changed remarkably and sharply.

### CHAPTER III:

#### ARMENIAN COMMUNITY: COOPERATION OR CONFLICT?

Nineteenth century was a time period of essential changes for the Ottoman Armenian society as well as for the whole country. Armenians witnessed the entrance of new actors into the field of communal politics beside the demise of some leadership and rising of others.

The Armenian patriarchate of Constantinople, as an element of Ottoman millet system, was given a large authority and essential duties by the state. The patriarchs functioned as an intermediary between the Armenian community and the state as well as a high bureaucrat since they performed duties such as collecting taxes from the Armenian community to transfer to the state or allocating soldiers whenever demanded. Parallel to this situation, they had a dominating, time to time even despotic, power on the Armenian community. Until as late as 1865 no book in Armenian could be published without the formal permission of the patriarchs.<sup>152</sup> They could try and even jail or banish those community members acting contrary to communal-spiritual rules and customs. Nevertheless, these punishments could be forced by the allowance and confirmation of the state. Ultimate basis of such acts was the authority they took from the state.<sup>153</sup> For example, in 1764 the sultan proclaimed an edict that gave such broad authority in communal affairs.<sup>154</sup> The Armenian patriarchs and also prelates were given the authority of practicing corporal

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<sup>152</sup> Vartan Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu: (1839-1863)* (İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2004), 85.

<sup>153</sup> Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*, Millet Sistemi (Aksaray, İstanbul: Klasik, 2004), 227.

<sup>154</sup> Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu*, 27.

punishment. However, by the modernization of criminal law in the nineteenth century this right of the clergy was abolished.<sup>155</sup>

Indeed, the power of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and the territorial expansion of the Ottoman Empire had been positively correlated; as the Empire got bigger the Patriarchate became more powerful since its jurisdiction was widened.<sup>156</sup> However, it should not be assumed that the Patriarchate could use its power at every corner of the Empire evenly. As it got away from the capital the effectiveness of the Patriarchate decreased just like, one can say, state power.

Patriarchs had been sharing their power on community with a group of influential elite called *amira* especially by the middle of the eighteenth century. In other words, patriarchs and *amiras*, generally speaking, were in an alliance in governing the communal affairs. Moreover, sometime patriarchs might have become simple tools at the hand of this class. *Amiras* were either high level bureaucrats/technicians like imperial architects or superintendent of mint or more frequently wealthy merchants and bankers (*sarrafa*). Merchant *amiras* were usually suppliers of the palace and army. The role of banker *amiras* in maintenance of *iltizam* tax system was especially critical since they lent cash to *multezims* who won the right of collecting the taxes of a certain region as the highest bidder in auction. However, it must be added that their position was quite fragile since their economic influence was not transformed into political power in Ottoman politics. Even, there were many *amiras* who had been executed for various reasons. They often fell from grace with the *multezims* they were connected with. On the other side of the medallion, *amiras* were highly prestigious and powerful in the Armenian community

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<sup>155</sup> Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi*, 235, 236.

<sup>156</sup> Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu*, 28.

due to their wealth and connection with governing circles and more importantly their philanthropic activities and role in the cultural revival of the community by opening schools, cultural societies, journals.<sup>157</sup>

This situation had lasted more or less unchanging until 1840s. At that time two important groups started to enter the scene: *esnaf* and modern intellectuals. *Esnaf* was medium scale artisans, merchants, and shopkeepers. Indeed, they had started to take part in the decision making bodies of the community in early eighteenth century. However, in the first half of the nineteenth century as their financial contribution to communal expenses increased they started to demand more weight in the communal decision making. One of the reasons of reforms of the nineteenth century was this demand.<sup>158</sup> As for intellectuals, they were ‘Young Armenians’ who usually went to Europe to get modern higher educations at the best universities of the time. The libertarian and progressive views they adopted made them criticize the conventional authority figures, reference values and methods of communal decision making, education and administrative system. Simplification of the Armenian language was one of their primary discussions and topics.<sup>159</sup> In fact, they were not so different from their modernist counterparts in other countries or Young Ottomans in this sense.

Owing to pushing force coming from *esnafs* and intellectuals and partial support they got from bureaucrat *amiras* some changes occurred in the administration of the community in 1840s. By the influence of the Young Armenians on some of the Ottoman statesmen an edict was proclaimed in 1847 which ordered

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<sup>157</sup> Hagop Barsoumian, “The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class Within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850),” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 172, 175–177.

<sup>158</sup> Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu*, 40–42.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 84, 85.

the foundation of two separate administrative committees for religious and civil affairs of the community. However, there was no stability and formal regulation in the election of committees. Likewise, authorities and responsibilities of these bodies were vague. 1856 Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermani*) was a turning point since it wanted each non-Muslim community regulate their communal affairs on the basis of official-legal written documents. Although Armenians had already started working to create an essential main document regulating communal affairs this edict functioned as a catalyst. Nevertheless, the Sublime Porte rejected the first draft in 1857. In 1860 the Armenian community created and accepted a new one; in 1862 the Sublime Porte ordered some revisions on this second draft, and finally in 1863 it officially approved the document which had had necessary revisions. Thus, Ottoman Armenians eventually had a document that created some representative and administrative bodies with their election and working procedures and provided the rules of governing communal affairs.<sup>160</sup> A revealing fact was that they called this document ‘constitution’ (*sahmanatrutyun*<sup>161</sup> in Armenian) whereas the government named it as regulations (*nizamname* in Turkish). Likewise, in the Armenian version of the document general assembly elected by popular vote had the adjective of ‘national’ before it whereas in Ottoman version there was no such qualification. As these differences reflect, the Ottoman government did avoid anything implying that Armenians constituted a separate nation in the Empire.

In fact, this document, which has 99 articles, created a quite detailed bureaucratic structure which had a popular basis. At the top of communal

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 86–104.

<sup>161</sup> This word is used as the Armenian counterpart of constitution but it literally means ‘circumscribing’ or ‘restriction’. This is telling about how such documents were perceived by the Armenians of the time. Namely, they regarded constitution as documents that legally limit the authority of administrative figures and bodies.

administration a General Assembly of 140 deputies who would be elected by popular vote was established. However, there was a great injustice in the formation of this body. Twenty of the deputies were clergy elected by the vote of clergy in Istanbul. Eighty of them were elected by the Armenians in Constantinople whereas only forty deputies in total were allocated to all provinces.<sup>162</sup> As a result, a constituency that constituted more than 80% of the Ottoman Armenian population was given only around 30% of the seats. This became one of the problems that caused tension between Istanbul Armenians, more truly central organs of the community and provincial Armenians and their spokesmen. Especially, after the Revolution of 1908 many Armenian intellectuals, authors, and professionals from Anatolia criticized this method of election and demanded its amendment for a fair one.

The General Assembly was supposed to elect the patriarch and two councils, namely Civil and Religious Councils. The role of the patriarch as the leader and chief executive of the community and mediator between the Armenian nation and the Sublime Porte was preserved in the Constitution. However his authority, comparing to the pre-constitution period, was quite restricted. For example, the Constitution stated that if the patriarch acted contrary to the essence and the spirit of the Constitution he would be impeached only by the General Assembly upon the call by Religious, and Civil Councils<sup>163</sup>. Additionally, the patriarch himself could not abolish or change the members of the Religious or Civil Council or related boards, but had to apply to the General Assembly for such an act.<sup>164</sup> The Civil Council was supposed to

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<sup>162</sup> Article 57

<sup>163</sup> Article 5 and 6. For impeachment of the patriarch the permission of the Porte was required.

<sup>164</sup> Article 11

elect and appoint four boards (educational, judicial, economic, and board for monasteries), and three committees (finance, legacy, and hospital).

Additionally, the Constitution formally establishes neighborhood committees responsible for every kind of administrative and communal affairs of neighborhoods elected by its inhabitants. They were supposed to work in coordination with central boards mentioned above. For instance, to maintain the schools of the neighborhood they were to collaborate with educational board, or in economic and financial affairs with economic board. Moreover, neighborhood committees were to give periodic accounts to each board in those issues that interested that certain board.<sup>165</sup>

The Constitution created a quite complicated network of some administrative bodies and positions whose responsibilities and authorities were clearly defined and demarcated from each other. Although there was a hierarchy between administrative positions there was also a system of checks and balances. These positions were tied to each other in a certain way; there was no independent body. Every office was obliged to give the account of its acts to a superior body whereas no one had the right to abolish an inferior body arbitrarily on its own will. For example, although the Civil Council appointed the boards it cannot abolish one of them unless that board acted contrary to the Constitution. Even in such a case the Civil Council could not annul the board at once but had to explain its causes to the General Assembly. In addition, every administrative body was to act as a mediator between the bodies below and above it. For instance, the economic board had to supervise the committees of finance, legacy, hospital, and the neighborhood periodically, and give its report of inspection to the Civil Council.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Article 52, 55, 54.

<sup>166</sup> Article 42, 46.



Provincial administrations were smaller models of central administration, at the top of which the prelate stood as the shadow of the patriarch. Every province was to have religious and civil councils whose responsibilities were very similar to those of central religious and civil councils but in a more restricted territory of jurisdiction.<sup>167</sup>

In order to meet the expenses of this communal organization and other institutions the constitution stipulated an annual tax to be paid by every individual adult who had a certain amount of income. The tax would be two parts: general and local. The general tax would be collected by the Patriarchate for general expenses, and the local tax by neighborhood committees for local expenses. The amount and the method of collection of general tax in Istanbul would be specified by the central Civil Council, in the provinces by local civil councils.<sup>168</sup>

This administrative system indeed created a paradox in the sense that it gave the leadership of civil bodies to clerics. Although they were not given absolute power, clergy was responsible of protecting the constitution as a secular document and preventing its violation.<sup>169</sup> This contributed to the ambiguity of their position and caused tension and debate over the limits of their role especially after the 1908 Revolution. Would they be responsible for only spiritual affairs or continue to perform social and political duties? In an overall evaluation, however, the constitution and the administrative system it created was a retreat of clergy and *amira* class for the sake of secular intellectuals and opinion leaders. This does not mean that clergy or wealthy classes became totally ineffective; on the contrary, they

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<sup>167</sup> Article 94-98. For details see below.

<sup>168</sup> Article 90-93.

<sup>169</sup> Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu*, 114.

still had an important place in the constitutional system but they had to share the power with other groups. On the other hand, the constitution approved and legitimized once again Istanbul as the administrative center of the Ottoman Armenian community and subordinated the provincial Armenians to the leading elite of the capital, both religious and civil.

Despite all it is not possible to say that whatever created by the constitution on the paper was implemented actually and effectively. Besides all material and geographical restrictions (communication, transportation etc.), what was more inhibitive was the attitude of the state since it suspended the constitution between 1866 and 1869; and by 1891 it became de facto functionless.<sup>170</sup> The Armenian National Assembly, closed in 1891, was opened again with 80 members on Oct.3, 1908.<sup>171</sup> In this sense, 1908 was a constitutional revitalization not only for general Ottoman politics but also for communal affairs of the Armenians. In other words, they lived a ‘double re-constitutionalization’, one in Ottoman politics and the other in the communal administration.

Before 1908, however, regardless of whether constitution was formally suspended or actually ineffective, some political actors, important for both Ottoman politics and Armenian community but completely out of constitutional structure, emerged by 1880s: Armenian political parties.

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>171</sup> Arsen Avagyan and Gaidz F Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), 152; Lewon Ch‘ormisean, *Hamapatker Arewmtahayots‘ Mēk Daru Patmut‘ean* (Pēyruṭ‘: Impr. G. Doniguan, 1972), 43.

## The Emergence of Armenian Political Parties

While Armenians of Istanbul and their elites went through all these developments provincial Armenians, especially peasants in eastern provinces, had their own reality which was quite unpleasant and indeed the main reason behind the emergence of revolutionary Armenian parties. In other words, the Armenian constitution failed in the solution of Armenian peasants' problems. Even some claim that it worked for the interests of the wealthy class that was "the cooperator of the Porte".<sup>172</sup> Double taxation and oppression by both government officials and local, mostly Kurdish, despots, insecurity of life and property were major problems provincial Armenians were continuously complaining but to no avail. Kurdish tribes were pillaging their villages, kidnapping girls and women and they were hardly punished. Kurds, in exchange for a sum of money they paid to general governors, wanted to and did stay through whole winter, sometimes up to for six months, in the Armenian villages and be quartered for free<sup>173</sup>, which was a huge material and emotional burden for Armenian peasants. Even in some instances they were treated like private property that was sold and bought. The words below, although they seem to describe a medieval state rather than a twentieth century one, were recorded by the Russian vice-consul in Van, Tumanskii, in as late as 1901:

"In Sassun *kaza* there exists an almost feudal dependence of Armenians on the Kurds with all its juridical consequences: each Armenian is assigned to some Kurd and is obligated to labor for him; Kurds sell their serfs when they need money; if a Kurd kills a serf, the lord [of that serf] takes revenge by killing a serf belonging to the murderer. Some

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<sup>172</sup> Sarkis. Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 41.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 49.

beys have even insisted on the “right of the first night” in Armenian villages.”<sup>174</sup>

One of the most frequent responses of Armenian peasants was to emigrate to big cities like Istanbul or Smyrna or outer places such as Caucasia.<sup>175</sup> They were living in an atmosphere of terror and conflict which gave way to armed fights in some regions with the Kurds as in *Zeytun* and *Moush* in 1862 and 1863, respectively. They complained to local governors about Kurdish attacks, and exploitation and sometimes they sent delegations even to the capital for a solution as the Armenians of *Charsancak* did in 1865. They sent 24 delegates representing 24 towns of the region who presented their petition to Fuad Pasha on March 31. What they got as response was being jailed for a week in the capital and later sent back to home. Almost two years later, this time Armenians from *Bulanik*, Erzurum appeared before the Grand Vizier to demand a solution for their problems. But the vizier dismissed the group and said: “If Armenians do not like things as they are in these provinces, they may leave the country; then we can populate these places with Circassians.”<sup>176</sup> Through 1870s Armenians of Anatolia continued to petition not only the Patriarchate but also foreign consulates, and to the Sublime Port either directly or indirectly through the Patriarchate and consulates. Hundreds of petitions about various maltreatments were gathered, filed and reported by the Patriarchate; but again no fundamental change had been produced.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Cited in Ronald Grigor. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 104.

<sup>175</sup> A.T. Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik Ve Sosyalizm 1887-1912* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992), 15, 16.

<sup>176</sup> L. Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 79.

<sup>177</sup> Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 98. Suny refers to Arshag Ohannes Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question to 1885*, University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences ;vol. XXII, No. 3-4

The collective disappointment created by these futile attempts directed some Armenians to search for an alternative way which was founding secret societies that did adopt armed struggle among their methods. The Union of Salvation, and Black Cross Society were established in Van in 1872 and 1878 respectively, and the Protectors of Fatherland in Erzurum in 1881.<sup>178</sup> However, these were either local or short-lived. The Armenakan Party founded in Van in 1885 was the first long term and more or less influential organization among Armenians. Two years later in August 1887 came one of two most prominent Armenian parties: Hinchakian Party was established in Geneva by Armenians who were Russian subjects and had never lived in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>179</sup> Although their aims and program changed during their long history, Hinchakian Party came to the scene with two objectives: the salvation of Turkish Armenia and socialism. For them, nationalism and socialism were compatible and could be developed harmoniously; but, since forming socialism in Armenia under the Ottoman rule was not possible national salvation was a prerequisite of socialism.

They organized some demonstrations, of which Kumkapı (1890) and Bab-ı Ali (1895) were the most famous ones that ended with bloodshed as well as some armed resistance in the first half of 1890s in some locations of Anatolia such as Sassun (1894) or Zeytun (1895).<sup>180</sup> The party weakened after the events of 1894-1896 because of internal divisions. One group, mostly Caucasian Armenians, under the leadership of Avedis and Maro Nazarbekian supported to pursue the existing

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(Urbana: The University of Illinois press, 1938) which uses the records of Armenian National Assembly in Constantinople.

<sup>178</sup> Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 67, 80, 84, 89.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 112, 114, 118–127.

ideology and methodology whereas another group, largely consisting of Armenians from Egypt and Turkey, claimed a revision for less socialist more democratic ideology and more moderate methods. In 1898 the party was officially divided when *Veragazmyal* (Reformed) *Hnchakian* Party was established.<sup>181</sup> After that point *Hnchakian* Party lost its power at a considerable extent and could not be as effective as before. They did not categorically deny violence a means of politics from the beginning but after the 1908 Revolution they declared that the party left methods of violence since the channel of representative democratic politics was opened. Although it remained to be the second important party after *Tashnaksutyun*, other Armenian party, on Ottoman political life and engaged in fierce fight against in diaspora communities after the dispersion of the Ottoman Armenians as a result of the genocide, it succeeded to survive till today.

*Tashnaksutyun* was born in Tiflis in 1890: the Armenian Revolutionary Party (*Hay Heghapoghagan Tashnaksutyun*). Although there were people with different tendencies in the initial stages of the ARF the editorial in the first issue of journal *Troshak*, the official organ of the ARF, stated that the aims in the party program were similar to Patriarch Nerses Varjabedian's program presented at the Congress of Berlin (1878): reforms and appointment of a governor-general for Armenian provinces. Three founders of the ARF Kristapor Mikaelian, Stepan Zorian and Simon Zavarian elaborated a party program in *Troshak* through a series of articles under the headline of "*Ayp u Pen*", literally meaning "ABC". For them freedom did not mean absolute political independence or having an Armenian government instead of the Turkish one. It rather meant economic and political reforms which would have

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<sup>181</sup> Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik Ve Sosyalizm 1887-1912*, 24, 25; Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 129.

opened the way of peace and progress.<sup>182</sup> So, in their 1892 program there was no mention of independence or autonomy. They aimed the establishment of democratic freedoms in Armenia through “revolutionary methods” including armed violence.<sup>183</sup> For example, in Istanbul the ARF organized the Ottoman Bank takeover in 1896 in which a group of *Tashnak* militants armed with guns and bombs took captive people at the bank in Istanbul and made some political demands in order to draw attention to the ‘Armenian Question’. This again ended with a violence boom in which thousands of Armenians were killed in the capital although the militants left the country safely.

The main motivation behind establishing revolutionary parties was to make Armenians hold the reins of their own destiny. As Ronald Suny mentions, one of their aims was to get rid of inertia and indifference of the Armenian people. They were aware that this would cause violent reaction from the state but “it was no longer possible to remain hostage to those fears”.<sup>184</sup> Having these thoughts ARF’s main aim was the realization of reforms in Armenian provinces, the framework of which had been drawn by the plan in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. They endorsed armed struggle as a means to that end if the sultan did not allow the realization of these reforms on his own will. *Hnchaks*, adopting socialism as their ultimate aim, before 1908, supported the independence of Armenians as a compulsory intermediate step on the way to socialism since for them it was impossible to form a socialist regime under the Ottoman system. However, they abandoned this aim after their sixth congress in Istanbul in 1909. In the public statement after the congress they emphasized "the necessity of the harmony of nations", "the right of historical

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<sup>182</sup> Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 170.

<sup>183</sup> Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik Ve Sosyalizm 1887-1912*, 27.

<sup>184</sup> Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 99.

individual existence of nations" and rejected both the idea of secession and the supremacy or domination of one nation over the others. *Tashnaks*, who understood freedom as the liberation from the oppressive rule of the state, also softened their means and methods after the 1908 Revolution, and even engaged in active cooperation with the CUP.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, both of these parties did not hesitate to collaborate with Turkish parties to topple Hamid's despotic regime. They also continued this cooperation after the revitalization of the constitution in 1908. The ARF opted for the CUP whereas the *Hnchak* Party was more close to the *Hurriyet ve Itilaf Partisi*. Nevertheless, they did not show friendliness to each other as much as they showed to Turkish Muslim parties. Although their sociological basis was very similar (intellectuals, artisans, peasants) and they had more or less the same political aims, through their history, including the second constitutional period, they severely conflicted with each other more for the political leadership of community and on the basis of personal disagreements rather than because of insurmountable ideological differences.

In addition to the conflict between themselves, these parties were frequently in dispute with more conservative elements of the Ottoman Armenian community both on ideological and methodological basis. Especially more wealthy circles did not approve the ideology of these parties whereas some were uneasy with their armed methods. Just from the beginning the Armenian bourgeoisie, let alone shouldering the leadership of nationalist movement, did not show sympathy to the Armenian national-revolutionary movements. They rather preferred tying their destiny with

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<sup>185</sup> Gerard J. Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary About Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 90, 91.



imperial governments, which they regarded as more suitable for their economic/class interests. In the exchange of this attitude Armenian revolutionary parties did not refrain from using violent methods to “convince” Armenian bourgeoisie to make financial contributions to the “Armenian cause”.<sup>186</sup>

The alliance, which can be roughly defined as between bourgeoisie and clergy, against these “revolutionary” parties, preferred to be engaged in “national philanthropic activities” such as opening cultural organizations, schools, hospitals. They, not being rebellious, tried to get along with the Ottoman government well.<sup>187</sup> The Armenian political party which was closer to their sociological stratum and mentality as a liberal entity was founded in 1908 after the July Revolution under the name of *Ramgavar* (Democratic) Party. However, it could never be as active and influential as *Tashnak* or *Hnchak* parties.

*On this background, this chapter depicts the fragmentation of the Ottoman Armenian community along different axes producing tension, conflict among them, and shifting alliances depending on the context during the second constitutional period.* But before going into the details of these fragmentations, in order to understand the context in which different Armenian social and political actors functioned, a brief description of communal organization in the provinces follows.

### Communal Organization of Provincial Armenians

The articles between 94 and 98 of the 1863 Armenian Constitution stated that Armenian communities of the provinces would be organized as a smaller model of

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<sup>186</sup> Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 20.

<sup>187</sup> Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik ve Sosyalizm 1887-1912*, 38, 39.

Istanbul at the center of which would be the prelate and prelacy. Like Constantinople, in each town where the prelates resided there would be a religious and a civil council with their secretariat. These would be constituted by the same method as central religious and civil councils with same responsibilities. Additionally, every neighborhood would have a committee again just like neighborhoods in Istanbul. Prelacies were elected by the General Assembly of each province. Unsurprisingly, these elections had to be ratified first by the Armenian Patriarchate and finally by the Porte. All these were more detailed in Constitutional Regulations for Provinces (Sahmanatragan Hrahank Kavarats Hamar/Uuhufanusahrapahans Zrahahunq Ghaharapag Zhusarap). According to these regulations, the number of deputies in the General Assembly of each province would be determined according to the magnitude of Armenian population of that province. Total number might have differed between 21 and 70 (21, 28, 35, 42, 49, 56, 63, or 70). One seventh of deputies would be elected among priests, two seventh from dioceses and four seventh from people residing in the town of prelacies or places at most three hours away from that town. Those who paid administrative tax and at least 25 years old could vote in the election whereas candidates had to be literate, at least 30 years old. The cleric members of the assembly would be elected only by all men of religion officially in charge in that province.

Once the General Assembly was elected it would elect religious and civil councils for two years. Each of these councils would be consisted of between five or seven members. Religious council would be responsible of general supervision of religious affairs, maintenance of the churches in the province, educating new clerics, and improving religious feelings of people whereas civil councils would be responsible of directing civil affairs including educational and economic issues,

distributing and collecting communal tax, and maintenance of communication with neighborhood committees. Religious councils in the provinces had to be connected and cooperated with the Religious Council in the capital; likewise, civil councils in the provinces with the Civil Council in the capital. In other words, they had to act in coordination with the central administration. Armenian communal administration of each province would be in touch with the local branches of the Ottoman government but, whenever a necessity occurred to apply to the Porte this could be done only by the Armenian administrative bodies in the capital.

Provincial civil councils would elect a committee of education of three to five members who were supposed to be educators for at least two years. The duties of this committee were expanding formal education to every village, providing education in religion, language, history and other necessary knowledge to boys and girls equally, maintenance of school buildings, encouraging societies and clubs that would support education, collecting information from neighborhood committees about the general situation of their schools. Civil Council elected also a committee of economics consisting of three to five members again for two years. Its duties were the general supervision and maintenance of communal properties in the province, relaying a copy of titles of these real estates to central economic commission in Istanbul, buying and selling properties on the condition of informing central bodies, directing the budget of local communal treasury, inspecting financial affairs of neighborhood committees and monasteries.

Neighborhood committees, consisting of three to seven persons, would be elected by people for four years in each of those neighborhoods or villages where there was a church with its congregation. However, it could not hold the office unless it was not approved by the civil council of that region. Similarly, it had to present

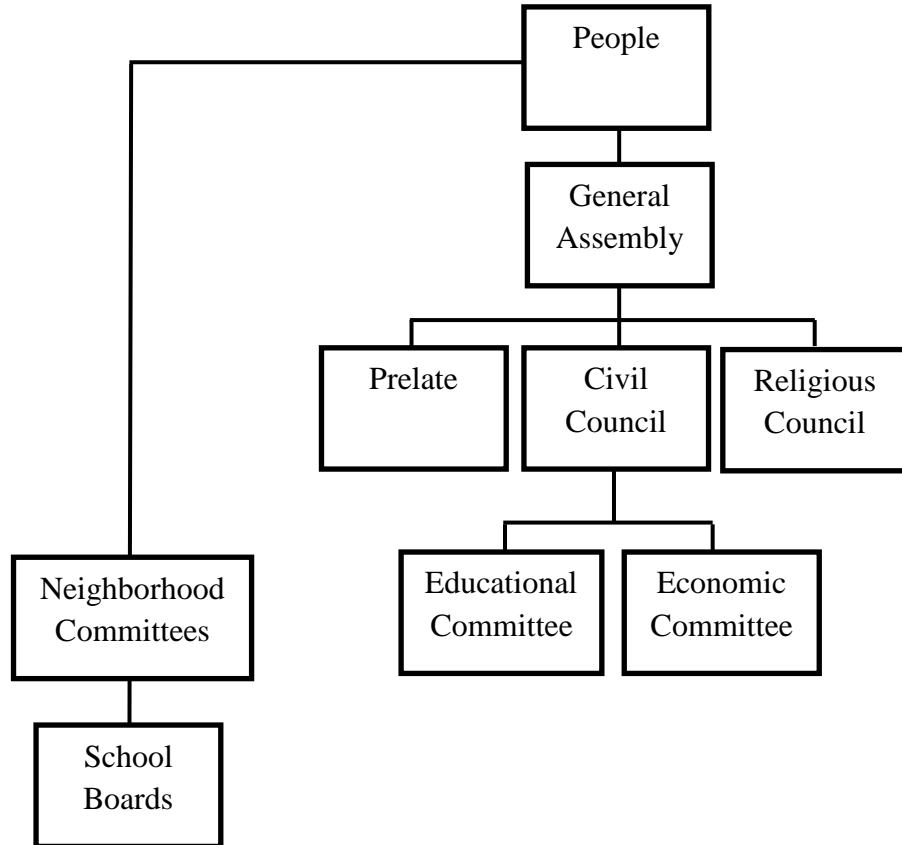
resignation to this civil council. Its main duties were general leadership of the community in neighborhood, opening and maintenance of schools for both boys and girls by appointing an executive board for each, caring for the poor of the neighborhood, reconciling the disputes occurred among community members, keeping the treasury and budget of the neighborhood.

The prelate was the head of the provincial general assembly, and the executive of that province. However, he could not make decisions by himself since all formal communication could not be valid without the signatures of related council or committee. Similarly, he could not dismiss anyone or any council or committee without approval of authorized body which was superior to the person or body he wanted to dismiss. On the other hand, if general assembly or one of religious or civil councils had any complain about the prelate they had to apply to the central administration in Istanbul that would demand his defense, send inspectors and dismiss him or the provincial general assembly if the dispute seemed insolvable.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> *Sahmanatragan Hrahank Kavarats Hamar [Մահմանադրական Հրահանգ Գաւարաց Հաւնար]* (Constantinople, 1912), 3, 6–13.

Figure 1: Organizational chart of provincial Armenian communities



Although the constitution created a neatly designed administrative organization on paper, and positioned every organ in mechanisms of mutual check and balances, in actuality it had serious problems preventing it from working properly and efficiently especially in the provinces. For example, despite tax mechanism foreseen in the constitution budget deficit of institutions, especially schools, was a chronic problem which threatened the inner stability of the Armenian community as rival groups had been accusing each other because of these deficits. Hence, one should not think that everything written on paper was regularly observable on the ground. On the contrary,

this administrative organization might have created conflict and instability as much as solidarity and coherence.

One of the most remarkable both indicators and reasons of the instability and conflict was the high frequency of resignation and absenteeism among the members of various administrative bodies. The committees that were supposed to remain in office for years often resigned completely or partially within short periods which necessitated new elections. In some instances elected committees resigned within a week or so without even having a meeting as the neighborhood committee of Iznik Armenian community did.<sup>189</sup> In the summer of 1909, the communal administration of Erzurum experienced also such a gridlock since the local assembly could not make civil council work and give account properly. When they appointed a new council two of five members immediately resigned. Because of this gridlock educational and other affairs of the province could not proceed.<sup>190</sup> Likewise, whenever an ad hoc committee was formed for educational or other purposes some members withdrew after a short while; so that the initiative became inconclusive. In addition, due to high level of absenteeism, councils and committees could not meet regularly and, accordingly, many vital problems and issues remained lingering unspecified for long times. Provincial general assemblies could not gather since the majority that was necessary for decision making could not be achieved.<sup>191</sup> For example, the meeting of local Armenian assembly of Sivas might have been realized by 22 deputies whereas the number of actual members was 35 since the rest was out of town due to various reasons.<sup>192</sup> This was so frequent that whenever assemblies could gather and have a

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<sup>189</sup> *Putanya*, Aug. 10, 1910, No: 20-22, p. 238.

<sup>190</sup> Editorial, "Vicious Circle", *Haratch*, Aug 11, 1909, No: 21, p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> *Antranik*, Nov. 21, 1909, No: 47, p. 3; *Antranik*, May 8, 1910, No: 64, p. 3.

<sup>192</sup> *Antranik*, July 4 , 1909, No: 26, p. 4.

session it was newsworthy: “Finally, the provincial assembly was gathered yesterday by majority. The meeting lasted for four hours but unfortunately no solution was produced for the lingering problems. Only fights and arguments came out but no work”.<sup>193</sup>

Indeed, inertia and inefficiency of the committees was one of the most recurrent complaints seen in the press. *Antranik* from Sivas criticizes the indolence of local Armenian assembly. Disunity and disharmony ruled in the assembly which harmed the society. Even, they had not met for one month, which was a disappointment for people.<sup>194</sup> The Sivas branch of *Hnchak* Party also criticizes the absentee deputies of the local Armenian assembly by a circular dated as August 12, 1909, as the assembly could not achieve the quorum because of their absence although there were vital problems on the table waiting for solution.<sup>195</sup> Likewise, *Iris* newspaper from Tokat/Evdokia expresses this feeling of disappointment upon a typical case of collective resignation: “We heard that the majority of educational committee, just appointed, resigned and the Civil Council has great difficulty in making a new election due to unwillingness of [possible] appointees. Similarly, the formation of the united neighborhood committee was aborted because of the resignation of majority...It is sad [to see] that our people avoid national duties”.<sup>196</sup>

Reluctance and indifference might have occurred on the side not only of the representatives but also on the side of voters as during the election of Erzurum deputies for the Armenian General Assembly in August 1909 only 69 people voted which is quite perplexing for such a place like Erzurum where there was a large

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<sup>193</sup> *Antranik*, Nov. 7, 1909, No: 45, p. 3.

<sup>194</sup> Editorial, “First Action Later Talk”, *Antranik*, Sept. 12, 1909, No: 37, p. 1.

<sup>195</sup> *Antranik*, Aug. 15, 1909, No: 33, p. 3.

<sup>196</sup> *Iris*, May 1, 1912, No: 2, p. 14

Armenian population of tens of thousands.<sup>197</sup> Most probably, many people were not willing to and did not pay communal tax and as a result of this they lost the right to vote in communal elections. One may infer that they did not consider participation to communal affairs important enough to allocate a portion of their monetary income to have this right.

Additionally, instabilities and unrest in electoral processes could occur due to fraud, or other kind of corruptions. As a matter of fact, for example, the Civil Council of Tokat nullified the election made for nine empty seats of local General Assembly because of such allegations. Moreover, the new election could not be done on the day decided before because of irregularities.<sup>198</sup>

Especially, corruption and illegal acts of neighborhood committees of various places were frequent reasons of complaint and accusation. Vahan Derderian from Adapazarı reports such an unlawful act by the committee of Surp Garabed neighborhood. According to his account, some ‘*aghas*’ seized the power of the committee illegally. Three of the committee members (out of seven) had resigned and another one had not attended the meetings for seven months. The remaining three invited the individuals they wished to join the committee, which was contrary to the legal regulations. The correspondent says: “I do not understand and not able to grasp that how, *in this time of freedom* when everywhere everybody puts great effort to prove the inviolability of the rights of people, Tarikian brothers, ignoring the articles of the Constitution, can dare to trample on the right of a neighborhood,

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<sup>197</sup> *Haratch*, Aug. 7, 1909, No: 203, p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*; *Iris*, May 15, 1912, No: 3, p. 14.



consisted of 700-800 families, of being electors and electees...The rights of people should be respected. We want the rule of people not tyrants.”<sup>199</sup>

Committee members were also often accused of financial corruption and malversation. When in one of the villages of Izmit committee members sold some communal property “to put money into their own pocket” and were caught, newspaper *Putanya* commented: “Well, small people big abuses. It seems it is the destiny of our community that those neighborhood *aghas* will never meet the expectations. Always the same pain...: abuse, abuse, abuse”.<sup>200</sup> Accountability of the administrative bodies and their members was a related problem. Although accountability mechanisms were created by the constitution, given the actual criticisms, they did not work properly. Neighborhood committees were under the control of small but influential groups; similarly the deputies did not represent the people’s interests and feel responsible to their electors. If this mentality was so dominant, “How, under these circumstances, can we expect that the machine called national constitution works properly?”<sup>201</sup>

Within this unstable and unproductive system of internal administration Ottoman Armenian community also had to deal with the tension produced by other kind of internal divisions. Now let us focus on some of these major splits.

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<sup>199</sup> Vahan Derderian, “A Correction”, *Putanya*, Feb. 10, 1910, No: 5, p. 57, 58. Italics are added.

<sup>200</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 10, 1910, No: 5, p. 56.

<sup>201</sup> Editorial, “The absence of accountability”, *Putanya*, Aug. 21, 1911, No: 20-21, p. 481.

## Old vs. New/Young

Among Ottoman Armenians the constitutional Revolution of 1908 did mean a change in the style of governing and toppling of old oligarchic circles from power not only in the Ottoman politics but also in the communal affairs. By the Revolution, a sharp distinction between old and new started to be articulated. The new period that began was “the time of freedom and constitution”<sup>202</sup> different from the previous one which had been despotism both for the whole country and the Armenian community. Both had had their own despots but Armenians had been under double despotism: Hamidian despotism and the despotism of communal notables (*aghas*) since there had been a small group of Armenians who had ruled the community dictatorially before the Revolution like Abdulhamid had governed the whole country in the same way. One contemporary witness reports that after the Revolution while Muslims were attacking those whom they saw as “sultan’s men” and pillaging their property, non-Muslims also were insulting and assaulting their patriarchs, bishops due to same reasons.<sup>203</sup> The reaction against the communal leaders was so fierce that after Armenian newspapers started to publish extremely negative articles against Patriarch Ormanian whom they regarded as the satellite of the palace. Some people got so passionate that around one hundred Armenian youngsters raided Ormanian’s house on July 28, 1909. He barely survived.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> In fact, this was an important discourse used by the Armenians of the time. Whenever they attempted to criticize a political or social defects they started the sentence as “In this time of constitution...”

<sup>203</sup> Yetimzade M. Tevfik Hamdi, *Bir Devlet Adamının Mehmet Teyfik Bey'in (Biren) II. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Hatıraları*, Arma Yayınları 7/a (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1993), 69.

<sup>204</sup> K. Emiroğlu, *Anadolu'da Devrim Günleri* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), 67. Emiroğlu relays from Selim Sırrı Tarcan, *Hatıralarım, Canlı Tarihler 4* (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınları, 1946), 35, 36.

According to the reformists the revolution in politics should have not been restricted with political life but extended to economic and intellectual life; and in this transformation old generations should have opened the way for the younger ones. This should have been a completely new life. Questioning the age of statesmen and bureaucrats and replacement of old cadres with young ones was one of the frequent themes of the newspapers.<sup>205</sup> This was true not only for the whole country but also for communities including the Armenians. Old elite should have retreated for the new one because this old elite (clerics, teachers, writers etc) was “dirty”.<sup>206</sup> Although Abdulhamid was eliminated by the Revolution old elites of the Armenian community were still trying to resist against losing their power in the communal affairs. Some complained of this situation and advised the exclusion of these people from communal affairs since they had been impeding the “rebirth” of the Ottoman Armenians due to their extreme conservatism. Also, it would be ironic and contradictory on behalf of Armenian community to demand the elimination of old cadres from the government if they did avoid following the same way in its internal affairs.<sup>207</sup> These criticisms also questioned the sincerity of “old and conservative” by claiming that they only pretended to celebrate the new era but indeed their sole aim was to continue their dominancy in the community. At this conjuncture Armenian youth should have been conscious and take initiative for the sake of change. At most, old ones could be tolerated until young ones got educated.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 142.

<sup>206</sup> Yergat, “New Currents”, *Putanya*, Jan. 10, 1910, No: 2, p. 3, 4.

<sup>207</sup> Yergat, “Society”, *Putanya*, March 24, 1910, No: 9, p. 98.

<sup>208</sup> Vartan Kevorkiants, “National Scarecrows”, *Bondos*, June 5, 1910, No: 6-7-8-9, p. 64, 65; Yergat, “Communal Tyranny”, *Putanya*, Feb. 1, 1910, No: 4, p. 37; Osmantsi, “Of Our Present Manners: Way to Young”, *Izmirli*, Nov. 6, 1909, No: 5, p. 35.

In fact, there was a power struggle between two different camps of elites. During the Hamidian rule Armenian leading circles, largely constituted of clergy, bureaucrats close to the palace or higher administrative bodies and some wealthy ones, were more conformist because of both their class interests and despotic character of the regime whereas Armenian parties could not seek for communal power openly since they were underground organizations working for the termination of the autocratic regime. In a sense, oligarchic circles of Armenian community used their “intimacy” with the despotic Hamidian regime as a tool to establish and maintain their communal dominance. Indeed, this was not a pattern restricted with the Hamidian era but also during Tanzimat period and constitutional time those Armenians who had close relations with the governing circles used this as leverage in communal affairs. Therefore, a change in state elites would have its reflection in communal politics. Accordingly, when the constitution was announced and all political bans were cancelled Armenian party members came out as new candidates for communal offices and opinion leaders who had the prestige of fighting against despotism as an extra source of power comparing to the previous epoch. After that moment an internal division as old and new classes in the Ottoman Armenian community was inevitable since, before the Revolution, the alliance of clergy and *aghas* had held the whole power and directed the affairs of the Armenian community however they had wished. When new and young people, largely teachers, editors, writers, and college students utilizing the liberties of the constitution, wanted to have a say in the communal issues conflict became unavoidable. “This inevitable schism necessitated alliance and unification of all *aghas*, notables, and clerics, namely of all exploiters or of all oldies against new, productive and fresh

movement”.<sup>209</sup> In the face of this challenge, old leading circles were not willing to give up their position easily. A struggle for political and social domination in the Ottoman Armenian community occurred, which was observable in every sphere of life.

This struggle between old and new sometimes became very cliché-ridden and superficial. A certain Mamigon Varjabedian from Marsovan points this situation in his book published 1911:

“Unfortunately there is a general confidence that what belongs to the past is [unremarkably] old and useless. Those who are not 20-30 years old are considered as aged and having outmoded ideas and accordingly should take a back seat, leaving the stage to new ones who are [seen as] absolutely and unexceptionally enlightened and well experienced on the contemporary civilization since they just have fresh moustaches. Young ones follow this ridiculous and ruinous dogma and wanted to take the control of all communal affairs. For this purpose they attack the church, religion, and moral habits...

On the other hand, those who completed their young ages treat new generation with disdain, regard them as inexperienced light-headed ones with immature thoughts and they wanted to keep the direction of all communal affairs at their hand. They, firmly clinging to old habits and rules, deny the necessity of reformation of the church, want everybody see moral and religious issues as our grandfathers saw.”<sup>210</sup>

An anecdote from a relatively small town of West Anatolia shows how deeply this fragmentation infused into the layers of Armenian society. In Geyve, Izmit, on Sunday after the Christmas of 1911 two short plays were staged by the students to an audience of more than 700 people. One of these plays satirized the mentality of the contemporary “reactionist” members of neighborhood committees (taghagan/

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<sup>209</sup> Maral, “Old and New”, *Haratch*, July 14, 1909, No: 13, p. 2, 3.

<sup>210</sup> Mamigon Varjabedian, *Asulisner: Hay Irakanut‘ean Mēk K‘ani Kensakan Harts‘erun Shurjē Tesut‘iwnner, Ew Skhalnern u Darmannerē Matnanshogh Gortsnakan T‘eladrut‘iwnner* (Marzuan: Tpagrut‘iwn Nērso ew Srapean, 1911), 36, 37, [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/\[u\]: mdp.39015041479695](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/[u]: mdp.39015041479695).

թաղական). During the play some *aghas* present among the audience felt offended and left the hall.<sup>211</sup> This conflict between old and new might have been even the subject of a play whose actors were just children. Therefore, one may conclude that the dispute between older and younger generations or between old cadres of communal administration and new candidates became a factor that tensed up and deteriorate social relations among the Ottoman Armenians themselves.

### Neutrals vs. Partisans

Another articulation of this struggle between old and new was the dispute between those who were members or at least sympathizers of one of *Tashnak* or *Hnchak* parties and those who remained out of party structures and criticized partisan thoughts and attitudes, namely between partisans (*gusagtsaganner/կուսակցականներ*) and neutrals (*chezogner/չեզոքներ*).

Although Armenian *Ramgavar* (Democratic) Party, established after the Revolution, and *Veragazmyal* (Reformed) *Hnchakian* Party were also political parties they were not usually categorized under the term *gusagtsagan* because their methodology and ideology were different than *Tashnaks* and *Hnchaks*. They were more ‘moderate’, and minor. *Ramgavar*, for example, was conservative and time to time strongly criticized anti-religion and anti-clergy policies of the ARF. In some instances this fight became so violent that even blood was spilled. For instance, in Izmir when one of the *Tashnak* leaders, Vramyan wanted to organize a meeting in the church, whose door had been chained to prevent it, a fight erupted between

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<sup>211</sup> *Putanya*, Jan. 20, 1911, No: 3, p. 358.

*Ramgavars* and *Tashnaks* and two young *Ramgavar* members were killed.<sup>212</sup>

*Ramgavar* also made an alliance with neutrals in the Armenian General Assembly of Istanbul constituted in the years after the Revolution, to attain the majority.<sup>213</sup> This structure of the Assembly was inconsistent with the real influence of the Armenian parties on the ground since *Tashnaksutyun* was the most effective party among Armenians, followed by *Hnchaks* whereas they were put in a secondary position in the most important representative organ of the Armenian community. Not surprisingly, this created tension; as a matter of fact, it was one of the hot debates whether party members should have been allowed into the administrative bodies constituted by the Armenian constitution. But before focusing on this in a more detailed way, a general description of the conflict between neutrals and partisans follows.

Authors and commentators openly referred to these two groups by these names, *gusagtsagan* and *chezog*. In other words, there were two fronts definitely demarcated under these names denoting two different kinds of thinking and acting. These two fronts severely criticized and accused each other of endangering Armenian nation's future and existence. Even in general elections for the Ottoman parliament one group could work to the detriment of the other. For example, in 1912 elections conservative circles were propagating that the interests of the Ottoman Armenian community could be defended better by neutrals/independent candidates instead of those belonging to political parties.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler Ve İttihat Ve Terakki*, 84.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>214</sup> Z, "Parliamentary Elections", *Putanya*, Feb. 18, 1912, No: 5, p. 556.

Frequently, these critics and accusations reached to the level of insult. Even being party members or supporters might have in itself become an accusation. Some newspapers, for example, were accused of being *gusagstagan*. Accused paper rejected this ‘allegation’ and replied by saying that it was unfair to label every piece of writing demanding freedom, or every individual rebellious spirit as *gusagtsagan*.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, an editorial of Sivas newspaper *Antranik* complains that everybody was trying to label everyone with a party identity and they did this in a hasty way. “Nowadays it has become a fashion to label everyone, be it an acquaintance or not, as partisan. As soon as you have a contact with a *Tashnak* they immediately call you *Tashnak*. If with a *Hnchak* or *Ittihadist* it is same. It is enough if you meet or [even] greet one of them.”<sup>216</sup> Same newspaper also tries to clarify very openly that it did not support any of these parties but it published declarations of both parties in the name of impartiality.<sup>217</sup> This situation points to a nervousness not to be perceived as a party organ, which is in itself very explanatory of how being party members or supporters was perceived by a group of Armenian people. This kind of allegations and defenses implies that in some circles and minds being *gusagtsagan* did not have positive connotations and that there was a stereotype of partisan that was not liked much by a part of the Armenian community. K. Anbarcian, president of the commercial court in Rodosto (Tekirdağ) expresses his reaction to political parties as such:

“If political parties are organized only to preach about their past heroism, turn saloons and schools into platforms for their adventures, produce only conflict, exploit peaceful

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<sup>215</sup> Editorial, “You Are Dirty”, *Bondos*, June 5, 1910, No: 6-7-8-9, p. 99.

<sup>216</sup> Editorial, “Loudmouths”, *Antranik*, Dec. 26, 1909, No: 52, p. 1.

<sup>217</sup> *Antranik*, Sept. 12, 1909, No: 37, p. 3.



minds I [rather] close my ears and turn my back to be able to use my freedom actually”.<sup>218</sup>

The dispute got so fervent, even violent, that Istepan Karaian, directorate of political affairs in the Ministry of Justice, wrote a booklet (“A Call to Partisan and Non-Partisan Nationals”) calling them to calm down and compromise. In this booklet he summarizes the main arguments of each camp and accusations to each other as follows. According to the neutrals, partisans were extremist and utopist people who adopted violent methods for their radical aims. Using stick and revolver was their routine. Since religiosity and traditionalism of Armenian people, the importance they attached to family life and their respect to elders were main obstacles to realize their aims, partisans targeted these values of Armenian people. For example, in order to destroy Armenian family life they described marriage as an outdated act and contrary to nature; instead, they propagated ‘free love’. They claimed that people became mother and father for their own pleasure; therefore children, owing nothing to their parents, did not have to obey their will. Partisans insulted religion, and hurt the noblest feelings of Armenian people, “poisoned their heart and blurred mind”. They were accused of diffusing even into the schools, and provoking young students against their teachers. Thanks to their “malicious” efforts, a generation of anarchists started to emerge among Armenians which, according to the conservative circles, would be a huge disaster for the community. Moreover, partisans wanted to collect all administrative offices of the Ottoman Armenian community at their hand in order to control communal incomes in accordance with their aims. They allegedly wanted to be the sole director of communal affairs. What is interesting is that neutrals, who spread the allegations above, time to time threatened partisans to use the Ottoman

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<sup>218</sup> K. Anbarcian, “My Sugestions”, *Antranik*, March 27, 1910, No: 58, p. 1, 2.

police force against them if they continued to use oppressive methods.<sup>219</sup> As a matter of fact, one can find articulations, writings in contemporary provincial Armenian press justifying the neutrals' view to partisans as the ones Karaian defines. One author writing from Sivas censured the parties for being selfish and dominant. Their way of thinking was "Let our party be the biggest, the first; let Armenians praise only us, not recognize anyone but us as we do not [recognize no one]". This became their sole aim and they did not hesitate to use any method, acceptable or unacceptable, for this goal. They carried their conflict to every town, every village, disturbing their peace. This fight corroded the Armenian society.<sup>220</sup> They alienated son from his father, student from his teacher, by leading them to extremism.<sup>221</sup>

People with this perspective proposed not to accept party members into the General Assembly and other administrative bodies. In other words, people would choose either party politics or being an administrator or executive in communal affairs. However, there were many rejecting this proposition. According to them, no harm came from the party members; they had been working for the nation and making many sacrifices. It would be ungratefulness to exclude them from administrative bodies. Secondly, especially after the constitution almost all intellectuals, productive brains, though there were exceptions, sided with this or that party. Therefore, it would be very difficult to find valuable individuals for official seats if party members were excluded.<sup>222</sup> Moreover, debarring party members from the opportunity to express themselves legally in communal organizations would be

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<sup>219</sup> Istepan Karaian, *Koch ' Mě Hamayn Kusakts 'akan Ew Och ' Kusakts 'akan Azgayinneru* (K. Polis :, 1910), 16–19.

<sup>220</sup> Shijghntsi, "Consecration or Curse?", *Antranik*, March 27, 1910, No: 58, p. 2.

<sup>221</sup> Shijghntsi, "Consecration or Curse?", *Antranik*, April 10, 1910, No: 60, p. 1.

<sup>222</sup> Editorial, "National Assembly and Revolution ", *Izmirli*, Nov. 6, 1909, No: 5, p. 33, 34.

contrary to democratic principles whose value and importance had been accepted universally. Even if one did not care about violating democratic principles, throwing parties out would not be wise either because they most probably would be more harmful for communal administration when they were not included in it.<sup>223</sup>

Partisans countered these claims and accusations by saying that the movement against them was a plot organized by old oligarchic circles of the community. For this sake, partisans claimed, *aghas* did not abstain from distorting reality. The allegation that partisans propagated heathenism and atheism was one of this distortions and a lie. Party people claimed that what they did was only exposing the abuses and spoils by some clerics, and making them accountable. The coalition of *aghas* and some clerics taught people only their obligations but they had never talked about their rights and the legal ways of protecting their rights. They did everything to make people's ignorance and unconsciousness permanent. Partisans, in their own expression, objected this situation and aimed to raise awareness of Armenian people. They accepted that there might have been some among partisans who applied illegitimate, violent methods but these could not be regarded as a categorical character of parties. They said there were extremists and fanatics among partisans being engaged in immoral acts as much as among the ranks of neutrals, not more.

Partisans tried to prove that in contemporary world even the most pious nations acknowledged that religion and church should have followed the principles of social progress; and accordingly clergy should have adopted universal truths of social sciences while addressing people. They should have preached not only about the obligations to God but also about the political rights and obligations vis-à-vis nation and state. Political awakening of people was crucial because if people were

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<sup>223</sup> Karaian, *Koch ' Mē Hamayn Kusakts 'akan Ew Och ' Kusakts 'akan Azgayinneru*, 4.

not conscious enough the constitution could not serve their salvation and emancipation; on the contrary it would become a ‘legal’ instrument at the hands of a privileged minority to exploit people by creating artificial majorities.

As a reply to the threat by neutrals to use Ottoman police forces against partisans, partisans declared that they would not tolerate the reactionary oligarchy that muted the voice of people through ‘legal-constitutional’ methods. It was not any longer possible to exploit the ignorance of people. Oligarchy should have understood this well; otherwise the irresistible power of people would make them do “willy-nilly” what they did not do by their own will.<sup>224</sup>

A polemic from the pages of *Antranik* of Sivas was also telling about this dichotomy between parties and non-partisans. In a soiree organized in Boston on Nov. 14, 1909 by the Armenians living there to collect money for the benefit of the Armenian hospital and the orphanage in Sivas, one of the speakers, M. Hovhannesian, emphasized the importance of caring Armenian children in Armenian orphanages, and nurturing them as Armenians not as *Hnchaks* or *Tashnaks*.<sup>225</sup> Garabed Narlian from Tokat, after reading this news, wrote an article disapproving Hovhannesian’s ideas. He sarcastically says that until that time he had thought these parties were Armenian. “It is understood from the expression of the dear speaker that they are separate nations, each of them should be recognized a nation by their name”. Afterwards, he seriously criticizes this perspective by reminding how these parties had fought devotedly, at the expense of their blood, for the freedoms of Armenian people. He jibed the speaker by implying that those partisans had not fled to the United States to save their own skin. “True Armenian should remain in his land, not

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 20–24.

<sup>225</sup> *Antranik*, Dec. 12, 1909, No: 50, p. 3.

lead next generations to extinction in foreign countries”. He continues that every organization might have included goods and evils in it but it should be recognized that these parties existed for the exaltation of the Armenian name, language, and destiny to the place they deserved. “The Armenian who tries to blur the mind of people about these associations is a wicked one. For such people our slavery of six centuries due to our disunity is still desirable.”<sup>226</sup>

Non-partisans had a conservative perspective in their criticisms against partisans, which especially crystalized on the issues of family life and religion as universal sensibilities of conservatism whereas partisans’ discourse was more leftist/revolutionary or pro-change. Neutrals portrayed themselves as the protectors of family life, religion and tradition of Armenian people whereas partisans defended freedom and equality, which largely meant the betterment of the conditions of working people, i.e. peasants, workers, artisans. Whatever their ideological differences were, both groups adopted harsh and menacing attitude against the other; and this, time to time, caused high tension and even physical violence.

Another important characteristic of the conflict between these two camps was that it diffused to almost every domain of social life, associations, churches, and even schools. In other words, it did not remain as a disagreement about ideals on the pages of newspapers but also turned in actual conflict in daily life. Every social institution became a domain that was to be controlled in this ‘fight’. Among these, schools were the most important ones. The presence of teachers, who were party members, might have become a reason of uneasiness for some others who, claiming that schools

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<sup>226</sup> Garabed Narlian, “Let’s Seek Unity”, *Antranik*, March 13, 1910, No: 56, p. 2. What is also interesting is the note added by the editor of *Antranik* at the end of the article: “We publish this article for the sake of neutrality although we do not agree with its some points”. Again one observes here an anxiety by the journal to be labeled as partisan.

should have been free of politics, worked to eliminate party members from schools. The parties tried to interfere into educational affairs and schools through those party member teachers. Those opposing claimed that these partisan teachers “poisoned” the mind of students and provoked them against those other teachers and students who disagreed with these parties. They also added that radical speculations about God and afterlife, marriage, and religion were spread among students by those teachers as if they were scientifically proven facts. Furthermore, in some instances teachers were kicked out of schools due to the ‘accusation’ of being party members.<sup>227</sup> On the other side, another group opposed this attitude and said that the teachers who were party members were men of principles having social ideals, self-respect and they were also qualified teachers. Since *aghas* wanted only those teachers who would obey and flatter them they tried to get rid of those teachers from party ranks, who did not hesitate to criticize them.<sup>228</sup> In some other instances the situation might have been the opposite, meaning that some teachers tried to inhibit the activities of students who were party members. Such an event happened in Armenian Communal School (*Azgayin Varjarian*) of Izmit. One of the teachers, Aharon Dadurian, attempted to end the activities of “Izmit Student Association of S.D. *Hnchakian*” at the school. Then, this student association wrote and distributed a leaflet with the headline “Our Complaint and Demand” to counter Dadurian’s efforts against them and tried to prove their cause. The management of the school took the teacher’s side with a declaration saying that he simply performed his duty when he warned the students under his charge to leave *any* associational activity for the time

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<sup>227</sup> *Putanya*, Dec. 1, 1910, No: 29, p. 318.

<sup>228</sup> For some articles from Izmit and Marsovan supporting and opposing to the presence of party members at schools as teachers see R. Razmik, “Party Members as Teachers”, *Putanya*, Sep. 20, 1910, No: 25, p. 265; M. Varjabedian, “An Urgency”, *Iris*, June 15, 1912, No: 5, p. 4.

out of school (emphasis is theirs). According to them, 14-15 years old students should not have been under the influence of any association/party except their school. The students writing that leaflet spent their time in party activities instead of concentrating on their courses, and carry their “harmful” activities to the school. They finished the declaration by saying that they would not tolerate such activities but would implement the rule strictly.<sup>229</sup> Openly, schools became a scene of the fight for political domination, to where the conflict between partisans and neutrals was carried.

Besides schools, other ‘spaces of culture’ might have been the stage of the conflict between traditional and reformist circles. In Armaş, Izmit, *Tashnaksutyun* opened a reading hall and some authority figures started to propagate against it by saying that it was time consuming and had morally devastating effect on younger generations. The correspondent comments that these people reflected the characteristic of their class and had no aim other than assaulting the Armenian Revolutionary Federation which was working, in Armaş as anywhere else, with zeal in educational and public affairs.<sup>230</sup>

As the most important and common site of socialization churches were not exempt from this skirmish for domination. After July 1908 *Hnchaks* and *Tashnaks* turned the Armenian churches into party centers and places of meetings, and lectures. The fights among rival parties within churches were not rare. In the summer of 1910, a hot debate about whether or not churches should have been open to the activities other than religious ones such as conferences, discussions, meetings started. Again, the Armenian community was divided on this issue into two. One group claimed that

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<sup>229</sup> *Putanya*, Jan. 5, 1912, No: 1, p. 540; *Putanya*, Jan. 14, 1912, No: 2, p. 545.

<sup>230</sup> *Putanya*, Aug. 21, 1911, No: 20-21, p. 490.

churches were places of spirituality and prayer and therefore could not be used for nonreligious, i.e. political, activities. They did not refrain from even using police force to block such activities in churches. The other group, largely party members but not restricted with them, disagreed with this and said that churches belonged to people and accordingly every activity related to their destiny could and should have been realized there. Parties argued that high level of attendance to churches created an opportunity to reach people, and it was completely legitimate to use this opportunity for the goodness and profit of people as they would be informed about economic, philosophical and moral matters by the talks in churches. Moreover, they asked that if churches were places for *only* prayer why clerics frequently interfered and gave sermons and advices that had nothing to do with “the salvation of the soul” in anyway.<sup>231</sup> By the same token, some claimed that the shutting of churches to nonreligious activities could be accepted only on one condition: clerics, from the lowest to the highest rank, would not any longer attend any nonreligious events.<sup>232</sup>

This debate, named as “Question of Open or Closed” (*Pats u Kotsi Hartsı/Բաց ու Գոցի Հարցը*), largely echoed in the provincial Armenian press through articles supporting either one or the other position. The periodical *Putanya* published in Izmit (and later Adapazarı) even opened its pages to the readers who wanted to share their comments on this issue.<sup>233</sup> Although some readers proposed closing churches to protect religion from exploitation some others suggested leaving the decision of opening churches for extra-religious activities to each local community whereas others said that closing churches would be a reflection of

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<sup>231</sup> Karaian, *Koch ‘ Mě Hamayn Kusakts ‘akan Ew Och ‘ Kusakts ‘akan Azgayinneru*, 20, 21.

<sup>232</sup> Ashod H. Bazbazian, “Open or Closed?”, *Putanya*, Aug. 10, 1910, No: 20-22, p. 230.

<sup>233</sup> *Putanya*, Sep. 1, 1910, No: 23, p. 251.



medieval mentality.<sup>234</sup> According to these commentators even the patriarch or catholicos did not have the right to close churches since these were not their private property but belonged to everyone, the people. Thus, parties like everyone else had the right to use churches; especially when one considers that the rights of the Armenian Church against the assault by the Russian Tsar few years ago had not been defended by these ‘church lovers’ but revolutionists who had had ‘the red flag at their hand’.<sup>235</sup>

After such a fervent debate which had overwhelmed the Ottoman Armenian community for months, the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, which is a superior organization to the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the church hierarchy, eventually banned all activities except religious ones and party meetings within churches on Nov. 11, 1910.<sup>236</sup>

### Religious vs. Secular

This discussion of “open or close” became another opportunity to criticize the church, clergy and their ‘traditional’ role in the Armenian community. Indeed, after the Revolution a certain part of Armenian community, mainly political parties, exhibited an extremely harsh attitude against religion and Armenian clergy, and severely criticized their role of leadership in the community. There were statements that every class had had its era in history, no class or group could lead forever. Therefore, it was time for clergy to leave the leadership to other classes in

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<sup>234</sup> *Putanya*, Sep. 10, 1910, No: 24, p. 263.

<sup>235</sup> Editorial, “The Problem of Churches”, *Bondos*, Aug. 2, 1910, No: 11, p. 118.

<sup>236</sup> Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler Ve İttihat Ve Terakki*, 47.

accordance with new requirements of the contemporary time.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, transferring the incomes of religious institutions like monasteries to schools was among the suggestions of the reformist front.<sup>238</sup>

The negative historical role played by religion and clergy brought to the fore by examples from European history such as the Inquisition, its tortures, and cruelties. Clergy was depicted as “a bunch of thieves and killers under the cover of religion and Jesus”. But time had changed, thereafter only ‘ignoramuses, dunderheads, and fanatics’ would be the followers of clergy.<sup>239</sup> A newspaper editorial speaks with the mouth of an imaginary clergy representing the collectivity of clerics:

“For centuries we have been fed from your table. Whenever foreigners arrived to grab what you had and abduct your women, you raised your sword but I opposed and said ‘put your sword into the scabbard, those who raise sword die by sword’. For short, I have milked you like a cow, and you let me milk you like a cow. Now today I continue feverishly my role of exploiter, thief, extorter, leaving you blind in the darkness. So, obey my words because I am the representative of God and what I say is faultless”.<sup>240</sup>

In this approach religion and clergy are the representatives of obsolescence and darkness, and the struggle against them is the struggle against darkness and ignorance: “...light is never afraid of the darkness”.<sup>241</sup> The people having this view even criticized the gatherings at a library where children summoned and read the Bible since they claimed that filling children’s head with religious tales were contrary to contemporary aim of enlightenment.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Ashod H. Bazbazian, “The Issue of Reform”, *Putanya*, Sept. 20, 1910, No: 25, p. 267.

<sup>238</sup> Arkam Knuni, “The Work of Education Among Us: Educational Budget”, *Iris*, Oct. 1, 1912, No: 9, p. 11.

<sup>239</sup> Joseph Strugo, “Clergy: Yesterday and Today”, *Putanya*, Jan. 1, 1911, No: 1, p. 328.

<sup>240</sup> Editorial, “The Problem of Churches”, *Bondos*, Aug. 2, 1910, No: 11, p. 119-120.

<sup>241</sup> Ashod H. Bazbazian, “Open or Closed?”, *Putanya*, Aug. 10, 1910, No: 20-22, p. 230.

<sup>242</sup> Kurken, *Putanya*, Sept.10, 1910, No: 24, p. 258.

The anti-cleric front contends that it is true that there, from the Stone Age to the present time, has been no people without religion and religions have played a great role in nations' life. However, it is debatable whether they could play the same role in the future. There is a claim that without religion the principles of equality, fraternity, love and justice could not be realized because only religion could touch hearts which was necessary for the implementation of these principles; but this is not true say the anti-clerics. Instead they propose that the source of all injustices, inequality, deprivations and all other evil that make human life miserable is power with all its kinds. Therefore, the salvation and re-birth of all nations, merged into misery, do not depend on religion but on the downfall of present political stratum and elimination of private property.<sup>243</sup> Accordingly, "clergy, before everything else, promises to be the loyal guardian of the tradition belonging to the past, the representative of a dead ideology...Under these circumstances it cannot suffice the needs of contemporary world endowed with completely new realities".<sup>244</sup>

Under these assaults clergy tried to protect their position and prestige by counter propaganda. They used the chance of addressing people, especially women, who attended the church more regularly. At these opportunities they said "Our youngsters are atheists; they do not come to the church. You should not listen to them. You should not read newspapers other than those published by the church. They mislead you, talk about atheism; revolutionaries are liars and hypocrites. They pull down our home".<sup>245</sup> Some clerics also emphasized the traditional harmony between Armenian clergy and lay people in the Armenian nation and advised them to

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<sup>243</sup> Harun, "The Elements of National Renaissance: Religion", *Haratch*, Jan.19, 1910, No: 5, p. 3.

<sup>244</sup> R. Razmik, "Secularization of Education?", *Putanya*, June 20, 1910, No: 18, p. 206.

<sup>245</sup> *Haratch*, Aug. 14, 1909, No: 22, p. 3.

unite on the basis of the Armenian constitution.<sup>246</sup> They urged their flock in their sermons not to follow those inexperienced ‘children’ or harmful associations that did and would lead them only to massacre, and not to recognize any representative body other than prelates and patriarchate.<sup>247</sup>

Clerics were not alone in defending religion and church; also some civil intellectuals emphasized the historical role of the Armenian Church in the survival of the nation. They contend that Church had always been not only spiritual but also real shelter for Armenian people. Besides its historical role, it would also play a crucial role in the preservation of Armenian identity in Ottoman society.<sup>248</sup>

As a matter of fact, Armenian clergy, although their titles had been spiritual, played important political and social roles as well, especially given the absence of a state for centuries. Also in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian nation had been always represented by its religious leaders leading all gatherings and having voice and influence in political, educational, economic as well as religious matters. As explained above, the communal administrative system created by the 1863 Constitution also recognized the leading role of religious figures both at the center and in the provinces although it restricted their authority and made them accountable to civil bodies. As a matter of fact, even after 1908 Armenian religious personalities continued to play their social and political role in the relations with state authorities. To give but a few examples, they might have been effective in the promotion of an Armenian school from *rüştiye* to *idadi* as mediators between local Armenian community and the government<sup>249</sup> they tried to solve the problems occurred in

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<sup>246</sup> *Putanya*, June 11, 1911, No: 15, p. 446.

<sup>247</sup> Maral, “Old and New”, *Haratch*, July 14, 1909, No: 13, p. 2, 3.

<sup>248</sup> H. Moskofian, “Our church”, *Antranik*, April 24, 1910, No: 62, p. 1.

<sup>249</sup> *Iris*, Oct. 1-15, 1911, No: 14-15, p. 2.

conscripted of Armenian youth,<sup>250</sup> or work to settle the problems of Armenian immigrants traveling from one city to another,<sup>251</sup> or close the budget deficits of communal schools<sup>252</sup>. As one observes none of these were ‘spiritual or otherworldly’ affairs. On the contrary, they were directly involved in practical affairs that influenced the daily experience of Armenian people in this world. Undoubtedly, education had been one of these domains where clergy was traditionally influential. In the face of efforts to make them retreat from education clergy tried not to yield; so much so that, the Patriarchate felt the need to send a circular to the provinces reminding the function of priests in education. It repeats that according to written rules and regulations the priests of neighborhood churches had to lead the meetings of the neighborhood committees on educational matters. They had the right of paternal and moral supervision on primary schools. It is mentioned in the circular that provocative anti-religious propaganda was made even within the schools; and moreover some teachers were participating this “unacceptable, unforgivable deed”. They warned that such teachers would be banned from official duty.<sup>253</sup> On the other side of the coin, almost at the same time, someone writing from Trebizond complains that the local prelate Bishop Balian and the general supervisor of schools, Hmaiak Khushbulian, desired to bring “Armenian sharia” to schools as they introduced religion lessons in the first two years of primary schools. They convinced the local council of education by saying that “young teachers” wanted to eliminate religion completely from the schools contrary to the fact that the Armenian nation had survived through its church and religion for centuries. The correspondent opposes to

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<sup>250</sup> *Iris*, Dec. 1, 1911, No: 18, p. 6.

<sup>251</sup> *Antranik*, April 24, 1910, No: 62, p. 1.

<sup>252</sup> *Iris*, Feb. 15, 1912, No: 23, p. 8.

<sup>253</sup> *Haratch*, Sept. 29, 1909, No: 35, p. 1.

this act by saying that trying to give an idea about God to children who were 7-8 years old was not pedagogically appropriate.<sup>254</sup> Once again, the struggle between religious and secular circles has been observed on the basis of who would dominate the schools.

Clerics were also present, besides official committees, in the events organized by official bodies as the representatives of their community like in the banquet given by the mayor of Erzurum in the honor of the Fourth Army commander Mushir İbrahim Pasha.<sup>255</sup> Even an Armenian prelate might have accompanied a sub-governor on his trip to inspect nearby villages.<sup>256</sup> These examples show that the role of Armenian clerics in Armenian community was much beyond religious affairs. Officially, they continued to be the social and political leaders dealing with every kind of worldly affairs even after the Revolution, and this was completely normal and legitimate in the eyes of state officials.

However, from the inside of the community some people criticized the public position of prelates and questioned their political and social functions as communal leaders. They interrogated whether the education and the upbringing of prelates were suitable for such a role since they grew and got education in the “dark atmosphere of monasteries” like “crabs in cavities on stone”, far away from social life. They learn only the Bible, study religion again and again and finally they become unreligious clerics: “Can these people, who are themselves in the need of being led, lead us? Where? To a peaceful and happy life?...Let’s face how they are incapable in the face

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<sup>254</sup> Antranik, *Haratch*, Dec. 4, 1909, No: 54, p. 2, 3.

<sup>255</sup> *Haratch*, June 12, 1909, No: 4, p. 4.

<sup>256</sup> *Iris*, June 15, 1912, No: 5, p. 14.

of contemporary social life and needs.”<sup>257</sup> According to these critics, political existence of a nation could not be tied to the church and clerics forever.

“They can keep their function in religious affairs but cannot and should not constitute the basis of political existence of the nation because we do not remain any longer as a religious community to which Hamid transformed us and recognized us as such but [we should be] Armenian nation that is specified as one of the firm pillars of the Ottoman union”.<sup>258</sup>

Even those who did not find any categorical inconvenience in having religious figures as communal leaders accepted that the existing clergy, especially prelates, were not qualified to execute such important duties. Many of them, instead of defending the interest of the community in the face of the state, often caused damage to these interests due to their ignorance and unskillfulness. For example, Mamigon Varhabedian says “Many do not have more effectiveness than clay sculptures during the official meetings of the government where they sit as the representatives of the nation; they shine with their performance of mute brides”. Most of them also were puppets at the hand of either political parties or notables.<sup>259</sup> He proposed a comprehensive program for the education of prelates through which they would take courses on political science, law, economics, sociology, and official language (Ottoman Turkish). Before becoming prelates they had to work first in the Patriarchate of Istanbul for two years and as deputy-prelate in a province for another two years like a kind of internship. Thus, they would become familiar and informed enough about the main problems of the nation. Furthermore, he suggested that the condition of being bachelor for prelacy should have been abolished to increase the

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<sup>257</sup> Samuel, “Prelates”, *Putanya*, Sep. 20, 1910, No: 25, p. 266.

<sup>258</sup> Editorial, “Scale”, *Putanya*, April 20, 1911, No: 10, p.402.

<sup>259</sup> Varjabedian, *Asulisner*, 11, 12.

number of potential capable candidates.<sup>260</sup> Indeed, in this description there is nothing religious about the prelacy except the title itself. Varjabedian, although did not openly declare, practically suggested educating prelates like civil secular political leaders. In one sense, this would eradicate the inconsistency between their functions and religious identity since they performed many nonreligious duties; but on the other hand it would institutionalize this contradiction between title and deeds of prelates.

In conclusion, Ottoman Armenian community was divided on the issue of religion, clergy, and the acceptable limits of their effectiveness in the social and political life. There were two camps, one supporting the continuation of traditional role of church and clergy beyond the limits of religious or spiritual life, and the other opposing the domination and representativeness of the clerics as outmoded, and contrary to the contemporary era. One can detect a third faction that did not principally reject the socially and politically leading role of the church but stipulated a fundamental reform in church and education of clergy if they wanted to keep this role.

#### Istanbul vs. Province

Another dimension of internal division of the Ottoman Armenian community was the attitude of Istanbul circles and provincial Armenians vis-à-vis each other. One can detect a feeling of anger and uprising on the part of provincial Armenians against Istanbul's domination whereas some Armenians in the capital belittled their

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 17.



'brethren' in Anatolia.<sup>261</sup> There was a general impression in Anatolian Armenians that Istanbul circles were ignorant and indifferent to them and their problems. By the interpretation of an author from Erzincan, province and provincials were like neglected orphans. Istanbul Armenians did not know their brethren in Anatolia. What makes this author think such is an article published in one of Istanbul newspapers, *Puzantion*, to which he refers. The author of *Puzantion* article, a woman named Vasiluhi Chukurian, had said that an urban man at the age of eighteen needed higher education for his intellectual improvement whereas a provincial/rural man at the same age, who was "either farmer or bricklayer", did not need higher institutions of education since he lived on his physical strength. His school was nature from which he graduated early in his life. The author, replying to Chukurian in Erzurum newspaper *Haratch*, criticizes this description and argues that it was prejudiced. Contrary to what Chukurian said, in many cities of the provinces Armenian people had become aware of the importance of education and invested to improve their schools. The author claims this based on his experience as a teacher working in the provinces. The provincial people knew very well that the best doctor, craftsman, even clergy would come out of school and therefore did not avoid spending money for their schools. As a matter of fact, many bright youngsters graduated from very qualified colleges of the provinces and "they were neither farmer nor bricklayer".<sup>262</sup> From these articulations one can easily observe the emotional distance between Istanbul and the provinces. As a matter of fact, these words, this time from a Sivas newspaper notice this gap: "Istanbul Armenian newspapers, though beautiful and

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<sup>261</sup> This does not mean that there was no Armenian in Istanbul supporting the cause of Anatolian Armenians. On the contrary, some intellectuals noticed the development and improvement in the provinces and said that Istanbul Armenians lagged behind it.

<sup>262</sup> H. Srabian, "The Province and the Provincial", *Haratch*, Feb. 23, 1910, No: 15, p. 2.

attractive, cannot infuse the deeper strata of our society, speak to our heart since we are different from Istanbul people in terms of our peculiar habits, lifestyle, morals and manners”.<sup>263</sup> Thus, in most of the minds there was a difference and moreover a distinction between Armenians of Istanbul and Armenians of Anatolia.

By this consciousness after the Revolution many provincial Armenians got rid of their inferiority complex and started to question the communal leadership of Istanbul. Generally speaking, the Armenian circles of Istanbul were seen from the province as regressive forces that resisted the entrenchment of the ideas of freedom and justice. These principles could be actualized only by political parties but Istanbul tried to degrade them. In other words, the capital, in this sense, had been inhibiting the “progressive forces in the provinces”.<sup>264</sup> There were some comments in Armenian provincial press claiming that Istanbul Armenians and their press was so immersed in conflict, corruption and intrigue that it could not be the leader and center of the Ottoman Armenian community any more. The province was more energetic and alive in that sense and had better try to find its own way. The dynamism observed in the provincial press, where both quantity and quality of Armenian periodicals increased, was the proof itself.<sup>265</sup> Some intellectuals, though living in Istanbul, agreed with this argument and exalted the provincial Armenian population as the new source of dynamism and energy. For example, famous story writer Yerughan (Yervant Srmakeshkhanlian) claims that Armenians of the provinces, contrary to Constantinople Armenians, did not come under the influence of foreign cultures, they

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<sup>263</sup> Kaghuni, “What do we need?”, *Antranik*, Feb. 14, 1909, No: 4, p. 2.

<sup>264</sup> R. Razmig, “Political Parties in the Provinces”, *Putanya*, Nov. 1, 1910, No: 27, p. 289, 290.

<sup>265</sup> K. Chuhacian, “Istanbul Press and Provincial Press”, *Haratch*, Sept. 22, 1909, No: 33, p. 1.

were “pure”. “We, Istanbuliots, are showing off that we will be the leader of the provincials but they have become our leader”.<sup>266</sup>

The most obvious injustice against the provincial Armenians was the composition of the Armenian General Assembly in Constantinople that was elected by the popular vote. Almost three fourth of the deputies was elected by Istanbul inhabitants whereas they constituted a relatively small portion of Ottoman Armenians. The rest one fourth was allocated to the Armenians in the provinces who were almost 90% of all Ottoman Armenians. Many voices in the provincial Armenian press criticized and protested this situation. For example, an editorial in *Putanya*, Izmit newspaper, claimed that the assembly, by this composition, could not be seen as the representative of “Turkish Armenians”<sup>267</sup>, and this could not be tolerated any more. As a matter of fact, the editorial continues, the assembly was indifferent to the problems of provincial Armenians. Two things should have been done: the deputies were to be elected according to the demographic ratio of each province and the accountability of deputies should have been provided.<sup>268</sup> Three months later same newspaper again focused on this unfairness. After repeating the necessity of correcting the composition of the Armenian General Assembly of Istanbul it notices also a ‘qualitative’ difference between *Bolsohays*<sup>269</sup> and provincial Armenians: the province had its own pains and needs and concrete ideals of progress whereas *Bolis* (Istanbul) was “loose”, “lingering in the air” since its ideals and works were feeble. According to the newspaper, conditions and needs change in time.

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<sup>266</sup> Yerughan, “Free Opinions”, *Haratch*, Aug. 18, 1909, No: 23, p. 1, 2.

<sup>267</sup> This description belongs to the editorial.

<sup>268</sup> Editorial, “Constitution and National Assembly: Provincial Voice”, *Putanya*, Jan. 10, 1911, No: 2, p.337, 338.

<sup>269</sup> Literally means Istanbul Armenians in Armenian.

Armenian National Constitution reflected the needs of 1860s. But, those times when *Bolis* could govern the province, uneducated and undeveloped, had gone. There were new people, new generations. In the face of changing conditions, there was a need for internal reform in Armenian communal administration. The destiny of whole Ottoman Armenians could not be left to the will of an assembly in *Bolis*. Thus, the National Constitution should have been revised in accordance with the present needs and democratic principles. If *Bolis* did not do anything the province would take the initiative. Provincial Council of Erzurum had already made an official call for the revision of the constitution. *Putanya* “greeted this nice act with delight and hoped that other provincial councils will follow the example of Erzurum”.<sup>270</sup>

#### Different Reflections of the Same Conflict

Indeed, the dichotomies examined above might be evaluated as different articulations or reflections of the same discord. Generally speaking, “old circles” were those who were non-partisans supporting the persistence of traditional leading role of the church and clergy whereas “new/young circles” were party members fostering the restriction of the church and clergy within the limits of religion. In other words, what we define as old, neutral, conservative and Istanbul circles overlap to a large extent, if not completely, just like new/young, partisan, secular and provincial do. For the sake of fine tuning it should be repeated that *this is a generalization and not a rule*. For example, there might have been some, many or few, who defended the retreat of clerics from the political and social domains although they were not party members. However, on the other hand, it was very difficult to find a *Tashnak* or *Hnchak*

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<sup>270</sup> Editorial, “Scale”, *Putanya*, April 20, 1911, No: 10, p.402.

member who did not bolster the restriction of the clergy. Shortly speaking, although there might have been many people in between, Ottoman Armenian community of the time was generally split into two as old, conservative, 'neutral' group on the one side and new/young, 'secular', partisan group on the other.

Additionally, in this dichotomy Istanbul and its Armenian press, again with possible exceptions, are depicted as the symbol of old conservative circles while province as the progressive, pro-change forces. Indeed, articles attacking Armenian political parties were frequently published in Armenian newspapers of Istanbul. For instance, if we consider *Tashnaksutyun*, although Istanbul newspapers had been praising it as the hero of freedom, savior and hope of the nation during the initial months after the Revolution within a year they started to criticize, even insult, the ARF mainly but not only because of its arguments about religion, church, and clergy and its cooperation with the CUP which, according to them, made the ARF a toy at the government's hand.<sup>271</sup> They also tried to alienate the ARF from the masses by propagating that it was a party of heathen atheists. The commentators, who relay these arguments and defend the ARF against them, contend, in return, that those Constantinople newspapers slandered against the ARF because they understood that it threatened the domination of *agha* class with whom Istanbul press was in an alliance. They saw the ARF as an enemy since it was "struggling to end their and their masters' domination".<sup>272</sup> From these mutual accusatory expressions the rift and skirmish between Istanbul and the rest are easily observed.

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<sup>271</sup> Yervant, "Journalistic Babylon", *Haratch*, Sept. 29, 1909, No: 35, p. 1. In October 1909 a correspondent writing from Istanbul to an Izmir newspaper, *Izmirli*, also confirms that there was a general attack by a bunch of Armenian newspapers (*Puzantion, Jamanak, Hayrenik, Aravod*) against *Tashnaksutyun* and its organ *Azadamard*. He finds this absurd because for last one year same papers had praised *Tashnaks*. Macistros, "Istanbul Letters", *Izmirli*, Oct. 30, 1909, No: 4, p.27.

<sup>272</sup> Ardag, "Masks Down", *Haratch*, Sept. 25, 1909, No: 34, p. 1, 2.

Actually, this split, articulated as different dualisms, corresponds to two different mentalities or approaches in some fundamental issues related to the community and its position in the Empire. To emphasize once more, “old circles”, parallel to the Ottoman state’s mentality, tended to evaluate Armenians as a community whose main determinant was its religious, namely Christian identity; so, they saw Armenian constitution as a right based on religious identity/difference of Armenian community. This inevitably brought to the fore church and clergy more; and this perspective emphasized the role of the church in the preservation of Armenian identity through stateless centuries. On the other hand, new/partisan circles did not accept that Armenians were a religious community and that accordingly, Armenian clergy had priority; instead they claimed that Armenians were an ethnic-national group with its own language, history etc. Also, they did not evaluate the Armenian constitution as a right born out of religious identity of Armenians since there was no such a declaration in its text. They evaluated the constitution as a necessity of democratic government. Because of this, they also demanded some amendments in the Armenian constitution for the sake of more democracy, secularization and fair representation. For example, they proposed to strengthen the representation of provincial Armenians and women in administrative bodies, the allowance of Catholic and Protestant Armenians into cultural and educational bodies and organizations, and election of clergy by civilians. Their suggestions about Catholic and Protestant Armenians especially reflect their trans-religious evaluation of Armenian identity. On the other hand, old elites opposed to such modifications in the Armenian constitution.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Anonymous, “The time has come even passed”, *Putanya*, June 11, 1911, No: 15, p.442, 443. Also one can look at the speeches made in the ceremony for the celebration of 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Armenian constitution in Adapazarı Ibid. 446.

Nevertheless, there were also some other conflicts and fights that cannot be handled under this scheme. Now it is time to look at them.

### *Tashnak vs. Hnchak*

Although there was a tension between conservative circles and Armenian political parties as explained above this does not mean that there was harmony and peaceful cooperation between parties, namely *Tashnaks* and *Hnchaks*. On the contrary, their relation was generally so strained and unfriendly that even in some instances they went to the court to settle their account.<sup>274</sup> Third parties often felt the need to call them to compromise, even if not to unite.<sup>275</sup> They were reminded that they were all Armenians before being partisans.<sup>276</sup> In March 1910 in Sivas 200 people signed a declaration addressing Tashnak and Hnchak parties to make them collaborate.<sup>277</sup> Some meetings were organized by the arbitration of prelates or other non-partisan local notables to discuss the unification or cooperation between the parties at least at local level.<sup>278</sup> Not only official meetings but informal friendly gatherings were also organized in order to warm up the relations between parties as Ashod Bazbazian, one of the local intellectuals in Izmit, and his wife had a tea party at their house to which they invited *Tashnak*, *Hnchak* and *Veragazmyal Hnchak* members and some ‘neutrals’. Bazbazian explains that his aim in gathering people belonging to different

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<sup>274</sup> *Antranik*, Aug. 8, 1909, No: 32, p. 3.

<sup>275</sup> Haygazn, “The Problems of the Day: Partisanship among Us”, *Antranik*, July 4, 1909, No: 26, p. 1.

<sup>276</sup> Varjabedian, *Asulisner*, 31.

<sup>277</sup> *Antranik*, March 13, 1910, No: 56, p. 3.

<sup>278</sup> *Antranik*, March 28, 1909, No: 10-11, p. 7.

parties was to provide a dialogue and exchange of ideas among them because only in this way it was possible to end the antagonism and hatred among political parties.<sup>279</sup>

However, despite all inspiration and encouragement from mediators, an ultimate and comprehensive cooperation between Armenian parties could not be implemented. Even during the parliamentary elections, despite negotiations, they could not agree on common candidates when such solidarity in some localities most probably would have increased the number of Armenian deputies in the Ottoman parliament. On the contrary, they were engaged in a harsh competition against each other and preferred making alliances with Muslim Turkish parties, *Tashnaks* with *Ittihat*, *Hnchaks* with *Itilaf* while severely criticizing each other's cooperation with these other parties. During the campaign of the 1912 elections *Hnchak* Sabah-Geulian made a speech in the courtyard of St. Garabed Church of Izmit. Sabah-Geulian, who adopted an anti-nationalist tone in his speech, had severely asked how it could become possible that *Tashnaksutyun* as a socialist party could make alliance with such a nationalist party as the CUP. The anonymous reporter, relaying this speech in the newspaper, criticizes his style of talking and wording because he thinks it was an insulting language; and asks similar questions to Sabah-Geulian: "How can *Hnchakian* Party that is a socialist one make an alliance with *Itilaf* Party? Is *Itilaf* a socialist party? Does he really believe that socialism and nationalism cannot be compromised? Does *Hnchakian* Party reject nationalism? If yes, why do proponents of that party say "we are first and foremost nationalist" when they are at bay?"<sup>280</sup>

Also, local branch of *Tashnaksutyun* replied to the accusations by Sabah-Geulian and explained the reasons of the alliance between them and the CUP. They made a

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<sup>279</sup> *Putanya*, Dec. 17, 1911, No: 31, p.531.

<sup>280</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 25, 1912, No: 7, p.561.



comparison between *Ittihat* and *Itilaf* and concluded that although the CUP made some mistakes it was more committed to the constitution than *Itilaf*.<sup>281</sup> As a matter of fact, a large number of Armenians, especially *Tashnaks*, saw *Itilaf* as a reactionary Islamist force.

As a result of this skirmish, one might have observed three Armenian candidates in the same election district: one *Tashnak*, one *Hnchak*, and one neutral. Surely, this means the partition of Armenian votes which eventually decreased the number of Armenian deputies in the parliament. This situation was often criticized by commentators as unnecessary and even harmful since, regardless of this or that party, Ottoman Armenians had three important questions that should have been brought to the parliament: the scope of the authority of the Armenian Patriarchate, land problems, and the security of Armenian towns and villages. These priorities should have not changed from party to party since these were the common problems of whole Ottoman Armenian community. Therefore, critics continue, Armenian political parties, instead of fighting against each other and making alliance with *Ittihad* or *Itilaf*, should have agreed among themselves to maximize the total number of Armenian deputies, not theirs. But, unfortunately they did not do that.<sup>282</sup>

*Tashnaks* and *Hnchaks*, should not be regarded as merely political parties that were active only in election times but each also opened and managed social and cultural organizations like clubs, labor unions, amateur troupes, evening classes, and reading halls. For example, Izmit branch of the *Tashnaksutyun*, besides having a theatre group, initiated evening courses of Turkish, French, bookkeeping and

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<sup>281</sup> *Putanya*, March 3, 1912, No: 8, p.567.

<sup>282</sup> Editorial, "Electoral Struggle", *Putanya*, March 17, 1912, No: 10, p. 572, 573.

agriculture,<sup>283</sup> or women branch of *Hnchakian* Party in Sivas opened a workshop, named as Araks, for women where they could learn various handicrafts.<sup>284</sup> Soirees, events, conferences, concerts, sport competitions organized by them were routine of provincial Armenian life. Through all these organizations and activities social visibility and influence of the parties increased. However, on the other hand, this also meant that the conflict between them diffused into society more through these organizations and caused the deepening of social rift. The election of executive board of various clubs or associations might have become a ground on which the ‘battle’ between parties was fought. If members or sympathizers of a certain party were elected, the opposing one started to discredit them in order to make them resign as soon as possible. At the end what got the most harm was the associational life of the community since societies could not work for their cause due to these inconclusive fights. For example, a society established to improve the communal education could not realize this function because of the skirmish of rival groups, i.e. *Tashnaks*, *Hnchaks*, or neutrals.<sup>285</sup> Thus, some suggested that cultural activities should have not been left to political parties but realized by neutral associations to lessen the tension between them.<sup>286</sup> This tension might have gone so high that one of the parties boycotted the activities of the other. For instance, Tokat branch of *Hnchak* Party organized a social event where marches and songs were sung, plays and literary pieces were presented, on July 21, 1912. The reporter says that *Tashnak* Party remained cool to this show since its host was *Hnchaks*. Even, a member of *Tashnak* Party rejected the tickets of the event for this reason. Upon this, the reporter asks

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<sup>283</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 20, 1911, No: 5-6, p.379.

<sup>284</sup> *Antranik*, Nov. 28, 1909, No: 48, p. 3.

<sup>285</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 20, 1911, No: 5-6, p.375, 376.

<sup>286</sup> *Putanya*, May 20, 1910, No: 15, p.173.

why there was such a fierce enmity between these two “brothers”. He says, “Let’s leave gentlemen this blind and shameful struggle of hate, passion, and jealousy. We have suffered much and will continue to suffer; the pit is deep and we are about to fall”.<sup>287</sup> Similarly, one reader sent a letter to a newspaper to report that he went to the communal theatre and saw the symbols of *Hnchak* Party on the two sides of the curtain and indicated his disapproval of this situation by saying that that activity was a communal one and could not be qualified or associated with the name of any political party.<sup>288</sup> Another one complains that in his visit to a local library he saw the publications of only one party and ideology whereas others were excluded. He claims that this was unacceptable because in such a public space all parties should have been represented.<sup>289</sup>

Shortly, there was a fervent conflict between *Hnchaks* and *Tashnaks* that diffused to the various domains of social life. It is ironic that as these political parties became visible and main actors of Armenian political and social life they started to produce more conflict and tension for the community compared to the Hamidian time when they had to work as underground secret organizations and could have not participate the activities of clubs or other associations. In other words, one can say, though in a sorrowful sarcasm, freedom caused the expansion of the inner conflict in the Armenian community!

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<sup>287</sup> *Iris*, Aug. 1, 1912, No: 6-7, p. 23

<sup>288</sup> *Putanya*, April 1, 1911, No: 9, p.397.

<sup>289</sup> Kurken, *Putanya*, Sept.10, 1910, No: 24, p. 258.

## Unrest Caused by Disunity

All these examples above show that Armenians developed sensitivity and consciousness about party politics and living through this sensitivity which necessitated the observation of fragile and over-reactive balance. Whenever some, from that or this group, thought that this balance was violated they started to complain. However, when one looks at the essence of the struggle between those parties, *Tashnaks* and *Hnchaks*, it is hard to find fundamental or irreconcilable ideological differences since their general political principals, priorities and sociological bases did not differ much. Given this ideological similarity the main reasons of their conflict can be defined as the competition for power, or having the leadership in the community. In accordance with this observation a commentator argues that partisan conflict had existed for last 15-20 years, in which the parties had fought as brothers against each other more than they fought against despotism. He continues by saying that if it had been a clash of ideas and principles for the betterment of the fatherland and nation it would have welcome; but it was just a fight for partisanship and individual profits which had been very costly: they consumed all kind of resources in this fight in vain, lowered the nation in the eyes of foreign press and public opinion.<sup>290</sup>

An instance from Izmit exemplifies the characteristics of this inter-party struggle very well. In Kurtbelen local *Tashnaks* organized a union to defend workers' rights against the employers. Since it succeeded to better the situation of workers more or less employers tried to eliminate it; and very interestingly, they found the local branch of *Hnchak* Party as an ally in this struggle even though it was a socialist

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<sup>290</sup> Shijghintsi, "Consecration or Curse?", *Antranik*, March 20, 1910, No: 57, p. 1, 2.

party. *Hnchakian* leaders, in cooperation with work owners and conservative elements, started to lecture that there could be no leap in history and it was still early for workers to be organized; they still needed to improve and become mature enough to be organized. However, one year later at this time *Hnchak* Party tried to organize workers' union in the same locality. The author, relaying the event, questions about what had changed in one year: did workers become a mature social class?<sup>291</sup> Thus, the conflict between those parties time to time might have become so blind that they even did not care about ideological consistency. Sole aim was usually to downgrade the other.

As a result, the Armenian community of the second constitutional period presents a highly fragmented picture both in social and political terms. This “disunity” was specified by many as the most important factor that weakened the community. It also brought pessimistic comments about the present and the future. “We [Armenians] are a handful of people but we cannot agree even on the smallest matter” says an author in a sad tone in an Izmir newspaper.<sup>292</sup> Internal disunity might have led to catastrophes as the history shows warns another from Sivas.<sup>293</sup> However, *Tashnak* and *Hnchak* parties seem not to have learnt from history given that they could not get along with although both were “revolutionary”, and responsibility would be theirs.<sup>294</sup> Indeed, this internal fragmentation seems to have worried many. Accordingly, there were also several calls for unity as the association named Little Armenia in Sivas made a declaration with the headline “Let's Unite Brothers”:

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<sup>291</sup> S. V. T., “Workers' Life in the Province”, *Putanya*, Nov. 20, 1910, No: 28, p.304.

<sup>292</sup> Macistros., “Istanbul Letters”, *Izmirli*, Oct. 23, 1909, No: 3, p.18.

<sup>293</sup> Chezok, “Today's Observations”, *Antranik*, March 21, 1909, No: 9, p. 1, 2.

<sup>294</sup> Hrair, “From the Life of Sivas: Revolutionary”, *Antranik*, June 6, 1909, No: 22, p. 3.

“It is offered to the Armenians to forget the past, all hates and the feeling of revenge and cuddle even with those who drowned their hands in Armenian blood just yesterday. But, nobody says that, after forgetting the hate of centuries, we should also forget the hate between our parties that has a history of not centuries but a decade or at most two...In the name of revolution, of the freedom of Ottoman fatherland, and finally of numerous Armenian martyrs let’s leave aside all partisan conflicts...”<sup>295</sup>

Besides, it was questioned how the unity of Armenians and Turks would be provided, which had been lectured since the Revolution as the critical factor of success, if Armenians could not provide their internal unity. Therefore, the unity of Armenians was as much important as the fraternity with the Turks. But there was not sufficient effort to implement the internal unity which would be the basis, and also prerequisite of the unity and fraternity with the Turks.<sup>296</sup>

Also, in April 1912, a commentator, after mentioning that nothing had changed much after the constitution since Armenians were still under attack and oppression contends that if the Armenian community had been united the circumstances would have been better. It was a pity, he says, that Armenian political parties and also neutrals could not agree with each other, “disharmony and irreconcilability were endless among them.” He notices that it is strange that *Hnchaks* collaborated with *Itilaf* and *Tashnaks* with *Ittihad* in order to “save the nation” but they fought against each other as the components of that nation.

“*Hnchaks* do not unite with *Ittihadists* because they were aware of their nationalist and assimilationist aspirations. *Tashnaks* do not approach *Itilaf* people because they know that that party is full of yesterday’s reactionaries...unfortunately both are right...[ ]As long as this spirit of disunity dominates us let’s do not detain ourselves with vain hopes; our national gains and rights will

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<sup>295</sup> “Let’s Unite Brothers”, *Antranik*, March 28, 1909, No: 10, 11, p. 2.

<sup>296</sup> Chezok, “Today’s Observations”, *Antranik*, March 21, 1909, No: 9, p. 1, 2.

not be protected and our complaints and pains will not be finished although we live in a constitutional country.”

Accordingly, the author proposes that not only Armenian political parties but whole Armenians including neutrals, the Patriarchate, Protestants and Catholics should have worked as a bloc in the elections.<sup>297</sup>

Under the light of all these evidences it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the leitmotiv of the Ottoman Armenian community after the Revolution was conflict and fight rather than “national cooperation or solidarity”. Furthermore, many contemporary Armenian observers and authors were aware of and annoyed with this high level of political and social fragmentation given the repetitious calls from different people and offices for unity and cooperation. However, despite all these calls an ultimate cooperation could not be provided. Even, the genocide could not terminate some of these conflicts and they continued to be fought in diaspora which is a separate story.

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<sup>297</sup> M. Varjabedian, “Satisfaction...On Paper”, *Iris*, April 15, 1912, No: 1, p. 9-11.

## CHAPTER IV: INTER-COMMUNAL RELATIONS

One of the main topics and discussions of the Ottoman historiography is whether communities of different confessions and ethnicities had been living peacefully or the *modus vivendi* of the Empire was communal conflict. It might be argued that the eventual and bloody break-up of the Empire and ethnic cleansings of the late period were projected backwards to create an image of continuously conflictual society. Moreover, as Donald Quataert says, present day conflicts between ex-communities of the Empire, such as those between Bosnians and Serbs, Jews and Palestinians or Turks and Armenians, seem so severe that people assume these are “millennia-old hatreds”.<sup>298</sup> At best, it has been imagined that Ottoman communities had been living as compartments that did not contact each other, side by side but segregated. By 2000s, however, some works that challenge this view and emphasize cooperation, inter-communality, and hybridization more have been produced.<sup>299</sup> According to these recent works, Ottoman subjects from different communities had had a continuous contact with each other in their daily social life; and also organizations of each community established institutional relations with both the state and the organizations of the other communities. Furthermore, these works claim that

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<sup>298</sup> Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, New Approaches to European History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 172.

<sup>299</sup> In addition to Quataert’s work for some other examples see Mark. Mazower, *The Balkans: a Short History*, Modern Library Chronicles (New York: Modern Library, 2000); Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Nicholas Doumanis, *Before the Nation: Muslim-Christian Coexistence and Its Destruction in Late Ottoman Anatolia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Ayse. Ozil, *Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Empire: a Study of Communal Relations in Anatolia*, SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East ;19 (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013).



communities had lived rather peacefully until some ‘external’ factors, such as war, nationalist policies of elites and states, capitalist and imperialist involvement of Europe, or immigrants coming from outside disturbed their relations. This chapter, on the other hand, though not denying the importance of these kinds of external factors, adopts a different perspective and discusses the inter-communal reasons of the conflict before dramatic events like a war erupted. So, it argues that everything was not perfectly peaceful before some external dynamics became influential.

Within this framework, this chapter tries to discuss the communal relations between Anatolian Armenians and their neighboring Muslim communities both immigrants and natives (Turks<sup>300</sup> and Kurds) just after the re-establishment of the constitutional regime. This effort is necessary and critical to understand not only the second constitutional period in itself but also the following genocide since, as Michael Mann says, as a conclusion of his extensive research of many cases in different times and contexts, such terrible events cannot be understood unilaterally as deeds of perpetrators but interaction of parties. “We cannot explain such escalation merely in terms of the actions or beliefs of the perpetrators. We need to examine the interactions between the perpetrator and victim groups – and usually with other groups as well”.<sup>301</sup> In accordance with these statements we will see that, despite ostensible discourse of fraternity, deep extensive hardcore social problems continued to exist after the Revolution. For instance, land disputes and providing security of life and property emerge as two critical problems threatening the inter-communal peace. But before, to put the problem into a broader context, let me refer to some other

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<sup>300</sup> In fact, it seems that Armenians use the term ‘Turk’ as a generic name to denote Muslim groups other than Kurds.

<sup>301</sup> Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6, 7.

examples of inter-communal relations in different contexts that gave way to bloody eruptions.

Indeed, the inter-group relations in those regions where mass destructions or genocides occurred have interested a large array of scholars from the humanities, social sciences, and legal studies.<sup>302</sup> A general finding of these studies is that traumatized victims of deportation or survivors of genocide/ethnic cleansing state that they had got along with their compatriots from other religions or ethnicities very well before “the event”. They say that they had had “a normal, harmonious, good life”, not even known or noticed “who was who”, meaning who belonged to which group.<sup>303</sup> Nicholas Doumanis, using the oral history accounts of Rum immigrants banished from Asia Minor to Greece, depicts very similar scene for the relations between Muslims and Orthodox Rum in Western Anatolia and Black Sea region before the 1912 Balkan Wars.<sup>304</sup> But, once the assaults and massacres erupt same neighbors might become merciless aggressors and murderers. Prior close contact between perpetrators and victims does not always “offer complete immunity”<sup>305</sup> since, on the contrary, this kind of chaotic times might become an opportunity to “settle” old accounts or disputes, both material and psychological. For example, in

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<sup>302</sup> For some see Eric. Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein, *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Victoria M. Esses and Richard Vernon, *Explaining the Breakdown of Ethnic Relations: Why Neighbors Kill* (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub. Ltd., 2008); Ivana. Marková and Alex Gillespie, *Trust and Conflict: Representation, Culture and Dialogue*, Cultural Dynamics of Social Representation (Hove, East Sussex ; New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>303</sup> Dinka Corkalo et al., “Neighbors Again? Intercommunity Relations after Ethnic Cleansing,” in *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity*, ed. Eric. Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 145.

<sup>304</sup> Doumanis, *Before the Nation*, 61–80.

<sup>305</sup> Miles Hewstone et al., “Why Neighbors Kill: Prior Intergroup Contact and Killing of Ethnic Outgroup Neighbors,” in *Explaining the Breakdown of Ethnic Relations: Why Neighbors Kill*, ed. Victoria M. Esses and Richard Vernon (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub. Ltd., 2008), 62.

Rwanda of early 1990s, the typical case of “neighbor-on-neighbor killing”,<sup>306</sup> “doctors killed their patients, and schoolteachers killed their pupils”.<sup>307</sup> Likewise, in a Bosnian village 35 Muslim men were killed by those Serbs “who had been their friends, people who had helped harvest their fields the previous autumn, people with whom they had shared adolescent adventures and secrets, skinny-dipping in the Brina river on hot summer days (sic.)”.<sup>308</sup> In another example, this time from Asia, in 2002 during the Muslim-Hindu fight in Gujarat, 1,100 Muslims were killed. It is reported that people killed by those with whom they had “played cricket in their childhood”.<sup>309</sup> These are some few examples, among many others, of the same situation from different times and geographies.

In order to solve the puzzle of such situations, Hewstone (et al.) suggests that where killings have erupted the prior contact lacks some very important characteristics such as equal status and cooperation but it existed just as superficial contact, a mere coexistence without meaningful relations across ethnic lines. “...coexisting, sharing the same street or neighborhood, is not the same as enjoying the benefits of extended, cross-group *contact*”.<sup>310</sup> For example, in prewar Bosnia although people from different ethno-religious groups had been socializing together, Simic claims that there had been an “invisible psychology wall”, a “superficial cordiality, more often than not masked a deep sense of alienation, suspicion, and

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>307</sup> Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 115.

<sup>308</sup> Hewstone et al., “Why Neighbors Kill: Prior Intergroup Contact and Killing of Ethnic Outgroup Neighbors,” 73. Quoted from Peter Maass, *Love Thy Neighbor: a Story of War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1996), 7.

<sup>309</sup> Hewstone et al., “Why Neighbors Kill: Prior Intergroup Contact and Killing of Ethnic Outgroup Neighbors,” 80.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid. 66, 67. Italics are original.

fear”.<sup>311</sup> Thus, more elaborated and detailed examination of prior intergroup relations is a very critical factor in understanding mass killings.

From this perspective when one looks at the Armenian case of the Ottoman Empire he sees that the survivor accounts of the Armenian genocide present a similar picture of duality about neighbors’ attitude and behavior: they appeared as both saviors and killers. For example, some survivors from Konia and Kayseri used similar expressions like above about their relations with Turks that they had had Turkish friends or their fathers had had Turkish business partners. Mutual visits between Armenian and Turkish households, participation to each other’s weddings, friendship among children are frequent situations mentioned by informants. According to their statements, some Turks were against what was being done to Armenians and lamented over their deportation. Also before 1915, during the massacres of 1894-1896 some Turks hid their Armenian neighbors in Misis (in Adana, today Yakapınar), and even some blocked ways to protect Armenians in Keghi (Erzurum).<sup>312</sup> But there are also opposite statements about the attitude of Turkish/Muslim neighbors in 1915. One survivor from Cibir, Urfa, after narrating how Armenian men were gathered in the courtyard of the Armenian church, says: “One of my father’s best [Turkish] friends, who used to come our house several times a week, was now beating my dad and saying to him that he wanted all of his belongings. My poor father, being exhausted, said that he would do that”.<sup>313</sup> Thus, it is not possible to claim that the relations were always harmonious and peaceful,

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<sup>311</sup> A. Simic, “Nationalism as Folk Ideology: The Case of Former Yugoslavia,” in *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, ed. Joel Martin Halpern and David A. Kideckel (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 115.

<sup>312</sup> Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 60, 61, 63.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

before and during the genocide, regardless of regional and other conditions. As a matter of fact, those words of another survivor from Marash are very telling about the relations between Armenians and Turks and Armenians' psychology:

“The Armenians were careful not to get into any arguments with the Turks. When political events were not favorable toward the Armenians, they would stand across from the mosque and watch the Turks come out to see if they were in a good mood or looked gloomy or angry. If happy, the Armenians would assume that positive things were said about the Armenians in the mosque. If they came out looking bitter, then the Armenians would avoid them that day. Watching the Turks in front of the mosque was the way that the Armenians would understand the political affairs concerning themselves.”<sup>314</sup>

This discrepancy of accounts shows that in terms of communal relation there were differences from one region to another. In other words, daily relations between the Armenians and the Muslims were not same everywhere, depending on the local conditions.

Keeping this fact in mind, this chapter tries to trace down common sources of the tension in the relations between Anatolian Armenians and their neighboring communities between July 1908 and 1912 Balkan Wars. What were the main parameters of inter-communal conflict? How did Armenians assess their relations with other communities? How did they position themselves in this network of relations?

## Land and Property Extortions

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 61.

One of the most noteworthy sources, most probably the most important one, of Anatolian Armenians' disturbance and the tension between them and neighboring people during the second constitutional period was land extortions, namely the lands and properties taken from them by force or deceitful/illegal methods. Surely, this problem had occurred much before in nineteenth century; but it, far from being solved, was still one of the most salient reasons of Armenians' complaints after 1908. These disputes cannot be evaluated as sporadic or ordinary judicial cases among individuals because their expansion and frequency through time and space point to a systematic and structural problem. As a matter of fact, the members of an ad hoc commission formed by the Armenian communal administration in 1910 to prepare a report about these extortions say that they had the impression that there was a special intention to make Ottoman Armenians landless.<sup>315</sup>

Armenian institutions had been complaining about this situation also before this date and tried to take the attention of the state to the subject but seldom got a satisfactory answer. For example, another special commission was appointed by the Armenian National Assembly on November 27, 1870 to examine and report the unlawful acts against Armenians in the Eastern provinces. The commission produced and submitted its first report to the Sublime Port on April 11, 1872. This report, which contained summary of incidents and suggestions to reclaim the extorted lands, did not produce any result. A second and more detailed report was prepared on September 17, 1876, which listed oppressive acts in 320 localities between April 1872 and the end of August 1876. Almost all of these events happened in economically underdeveloped villages. 272 of all cases were land usurpation by *aghas*, mullahs, sheiks. Any judicial measures or punishment against perpetrators

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<sup>315</sup> See below.

were rare. The commission mentioned the feeling of anger among Muslims, both ordinary people and officials, towards the idea of equality with Christians. Circassian refugees who had been settled in different places such as Erzurum, Sivas, Diyarbakir, Aintab, Kilis, Zeytun as well as Kurdish, Avshar, and Turkish *derebeys* were held responsible, as the perpetrators of these unlawful acts, by the report.<sup>316</sup>

Unsurprisingly, after waves of massacres extortions had increased. Indeed, one of the major reason of these killings was to seizure the lands owned by Armenians. When the fever of the massacres cooled down survivors tried to take back their lands through administrative and judicial mechanisms which created cases lasting even for decades. As a matter of fact, after 1894-1896 massacres Sultan Abdulhamid issued an edict in which it was declared that all Armenians who left the country had to return within at most six weeks to claim any right on their real estate.<sup>317</sup>

The situation did not change much after 1908 when the ruling power passed from Abdulhamid to the CUP. The Armenians, who had emigrated abroad because of oppressions during the Hamidian regime, turned back to their hometowns after 1908 because they were convinced that a new era had begun. However, they found their lands and properties invaded, which was disappointing for them. Gerald Henry Fitzmaurice, Chief Dragoman and First Secretary at the British Embassy, explains the situation in 1913 as such:

"After the revival of the Constitution in 1908, large numbers of Armenians returned, especially from the Caucasus, and though the Committee of Union and Progress

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<sup>316</sup> Stephan H. Astourian, "The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity and Power," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Muge Göçek, and Norman M Naimark (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59, 60.

<sup>317</sup> Aram Arkun, "Into the Modern Age: 1800-1913," in *The Armenians: Past and Present in the Making of National Identity*, ed. Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchian, Caucasus World (Abingdon, Oxon, Oxford ; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 81, 82.

repeatedly promised to deal with the matter, especially in the case of Armenians who are in possession of the title-deeds of their lands, nothing has been done...This failure to settle the usurped lands question has been interpreted by the Armenians as evidence of bad faith on the part of the Committee [of Union and Progress], and of their secret intention to persist in the old methods of breaking up the peasantry".<sup>318</sup>

The restitution of lands was one of the issues brought to the fore also by Armenian political parties just after the 1908 Revolution. Both *Tashnaks* and *Hnchaks* demanded the return of the seized lands belonging to Armenians by separate declarations on the August 3, and November 24, 1908, respectively.<sup>319</sup> These demands must have been discussed also in Turkish political circles that Cemal Pasha states in his memoirs that before the mutiny of March 31 the CUP had intended to form a special commission and sent it to the eastern provinces to solve land disputes between Armenians and others.<sup>320</sup> However, this attempt faced a harsh opposition from the Muslim deputies of those regions. Indeed, whenever Armenian parliamentarians tried to open discussion about this topic in the general assembly, Muslim deputies of the eastern provinces formed a bloc against these attempts.<sup>321</sup> Mostly because of this opposition and partially because of the rebellion of March 31 the CUP completely quit this project.<sup>322</sup> However, the CUP was not the sole Turkish party that was interested in this problem; *Ahrar* Party also tried to attract Armenians

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<sup>318</sup> Relayed from official correspondence of Foreign Office by Stephan H. Astourian, "Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization," in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 66, 67.

<sup>319</sup> Arsen Avagyan and Gaidz F. Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), 34, 43.

<sup>320</sup> D.M. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology Under Ottoman Rule 1908-1914* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 59.

<sup>321</sup> Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, 53.

<sup>322</sup> Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology Under Ottoman Rule 1908-1914*, 60.



and their votes by promising in its party program to give back the extorted lands.<sup>323</sup> In sum, restitution of usurped Armenian lands was one of the burning political issues of the time although the problem could not be solved eventually.

In the face of all these inconclusive political initiatives Armenian institutions and committees kept writing reports and petitions. In the beginning of 1909 the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople sent a circular to the prelacies in which it demanded preparation and submission of the lists showing land seizure cases in their province.<sup>324</sup> As a result of combining the information coming from different provinces another report, summarizing extortions, was prepared again on November 16, 1909 by the Commission of Usurped Lands established by the Armenian deputies under the Patriarchate. This commission presented detectable illegalities as reports in four books: 1910, 1911, and 1912 (two pieces). These reports, which were published among the official publications of the Patriarchate, collect all cases as entries with basic information about each particular case of extortion: locality, name of the land owner, square measure of the land and its value, specification of the invader(s). The report of 1910 lists 138 cases, 1911 report mentions 274 cases whereas 1912's first and second issues have 398 and 166, respectively. However, the date of a report does not mean that that report sums up the extortions happened only in that particular year. These reports also sum up the cases happened even in 1880s or 1890s and lingering since then. Commission members say that they were surprised in the face

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<sup>323</sup> Baran Hocaoglu, *II. Meşrutiyette İktidar Muhalefet İlişkileri 1908- 1913* (Kitap Yayınevi, 2010), 79, 80.

<sup>324</sup> *Antranik*, Feb.7, 1909, No: 3, p. 3

of immensity of the “pain”; and had the impression that there was devotion (or vow) to turn Armenians landless serfs.<sup>325</sup>

The first volume includes invaded communal properties such as monasteries, churches, cemeteries. It specifies 13 monasteries (some with the lands belonging to them), 27 churches, 16 cemeteries, and 80 piece of other estates belonging to the community. Second volume summarizes important properties extorted from private individuals. Here ‘important’ means either those properties or estates worth more than 100 liras or lands larger than 100 *dönüm* (decare). Third volume mentions collective properties, namely belonging to a group of Armenian villagers, which had been extorted by government, some despots, or neighboring communities. The commission members say that in 90% of the cases belonging to these three categories genuine owners had their title deeds or the property was registered on their name. Therefore, they were still paying the taxes attached to these properties whereas incomes of the lands were taken by invaders. Fourth volume focuses on older cases happened in 1880s and 1890s. It was divided in itself under the headlines of “the examples of illegal invasions by the government for tax debts”, “the examples of illegal invasions for debts to the Agricultural Bank”, “illegal invasion for individual debts”, “invasions for unknown debts”.<sup>326</sup>

Repeating some entries from this report would give an idea about their characteristics:

“Sivas-Gürün-Göbekören: The government has invaded Misak Tahmazian’s three fields that are worth 300 liras for

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<sup>325</sup> Armenian Church., *Teghekgir Hoghayin Grawmants’ Handznazhoghovoy I* (K. Polis: Tpagr. T. Tōghramachean, 1910), 1.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

10 liras [tax debt]. It [also] has invaded Setrak Tahmazian's field that is worth 60 liras for 20 liras"<sup>327</sup>

"Bursa-Gemlik: In various villages of Gemlik the government has invaded valuable fields, pastures etc. belonging to more than 20 peasants in the exchange of a small amount of tax debt in 1903. The taxes of the lands have been still paid by the peasants"<sup>328</sup>

"Harput-Çemişgezek: Surp Nishan monastery was invaded by Diab Agha who is the grandson of Kahraman Agha from Ulash tribe. The monastery has lands of 1000 *dönüm*."<sup>329</sup>

"Diyarbakir-Siverek: 13 fields equal to 192 acres, one house of 2 acres belonging to Surp Sarkis Church in Alipınar have been captured forcibly by Hacı Eminzade Osman, Muftizade Hüseyin and Ipekoglu Mustafa since 1895."<sup>330</sup>

"Izmit-Armaş-Khasgal: Immigrants from Rumeli have invaded a field of 200 *dönüm* (decare) belonging to Sukias Tsamakian."<sup>331</sup>

"Bursa-downtown Gemgem district: Sheik Zabit invaded the grove, worth 60 liras, belonging to Apraham Melkonian's wife, Hripsime and gave it to immigrants (*muhajir*)."<sup>332</sup>

"Sivas-Kangal: Despot Gülmollazade Abo Agha has invaded 8 fields equal to 452 *dönüm*, a threshing floor, a sheep fold, a house, all belonging to Krikor Khacherian. He [Krikor] has title deeds."<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Armenian Church., *Teghekgir Hoghayin Grawmants' Handznazhoghovoy IV* (K. Polis: Tpagr. T. Tōghramachean, 1912), 3.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Armenian Church., *Teghekgir Hoghayin Grawmants' Handznazhoghovoy I*, 5.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>331</sup> Armenian Church., *Teghekgir Hoghayin Grawmants' Handznazhoghovoy II* (K. Polis: Tpagr. T. Tōghramachean, 1911), 1.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

“Sivas-Şebinkarahisar: In Zarli village 34 fields, a garden, a stable, 5 rush beds belonging to Hovhannes Vartanian’s orphans were invaded by local Muslims.”<sup>334</sup>

“Sivas-Amasia: The municipality had invaded a land of 400 square meters belonging to Garabed Papazian and turned it into a slaughterhouse in 1903.”<sup>335</sup>

“Izmit-Karamusa [Karamürsel?]-Yalakdere: Farms of 600 *dönüm*, 225 trees which are equal to 270 title deeds belonging to Armenian peasantry have been extorted by *Taşlıcalı* Mustafa since 1898. Upon complaint investigation was held and Armenians were found rightful; however, the invader has still kept the estates.”<sup>336</sup>

“Diyarbakir-Silvan-Hacican: The lands belonging to Ohan Usoian have been invaded by Kurds in 1898.”<sup>337</sup>

It is not possible to repeat all of the hundreds of cases mentioned in these reports but similar cases were geographically so widespread that one can find distinct but similar cases from Adana to Trabzon, from Erzurum to Kastamonu, or from Bitlis to Bursa. In all these examples, “invaders” were either a local despot(s) or neighboring communities. In other words, in some cases the perpetrator is named personally as Sheik Zabit or *Taşlıcalı* Mustafa whereas in other cases they are “Rumeli immigrants”, “local Muslims”, or “Kurds”.<sup>338</sup> *Another common characteristic of disputes is their longevity as some of the disputes had lasted even more than two decades without a final result. It is unsurprising that this longevity contributed to the persistence and even acceleration of inter-communal tension given that new*

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Armenian Church., *Teghekgir Hoghayin Grawmants’ Handznazhoghovoy III* (K. Polis: Tpagr. T. Tōghramachean, 1912), 1.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>338</sup> Although it was comparatively very rare, Armenian communities might have had disputes with other Christian communities such as Catholics or Chaldeans over especially mastery of some churches and their estates.

*generations took over the problem from their fathers. One might say that land problem was a factor continuously 'poisoning' inter-communal relations.*

Indeed, the picture reflected by contemporary Armenian press is not much different from what these reports depict. For example, Tokat newspaper *Iris* reports that a farm belonging to an Armenian family, Mahtesians, in Huru, three hours away from the town, had been given to immigrants (*muhajir*). Mahtesians applied to officials to solve this problem for no avail. Recently two inspectors had been sent by local Administrative Council (*Meclis-i İdare*) to investigate the case.<sup>339</sup> Similarly, the Armenian neighborhood committee of *Ferizli* village sent a complaint to the local Armenian Civil Council of Izmit that Turkish immigrants of *Sinanoglu* village had been preventing them from reaching their lands on the other shore of *Sakarya* River. Turkish immigrants continuously sank the boats Armenian villagers used to pass the other side. The committee wanted the council present this case to *mutasarrif* so that just action would be taken.<sup>340</sup>

An account written from Armash, Izmit, also explains how tension developed between local Armenians and immigrants: "Half an hour away from our village there is another village called *Inamiye* founded by immigrants without an imperial permit. In the beginning they had established this village by buying the lands belonging to Minas Istanbultsian and his brothers who have been natives of Armash. Later, they started to harm their neighboring fields. They forced people to sell their fields for half of their value, or other times they invaded without paying anything; examples

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<sup>339</sup> *Iris*, Dec. 15, 1911, No: 19, p. 7.

<sup>340</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 10, 1910, No: 5, p. 58.

are many. They even caused more harm to charcoal production as they have not let peasants cut even a branch from the mountains.”<sup>341</sup>

Another correspondent, G.S. Deghirmencian, from the village of Kılıç, Yalova, describes the general atmosphere of the village. He says that the most important problem of the Armenians of the locality was the land dispute with immigrants since they had invaded 400 acres of land. According to his description, this dispute had been lasting for 18 years despite the suit brought by Armenians against immigrants. This problem made the local Armenians suffer economically.<sup>342</sup>

Similar examples occurred also in the eastern part of the country. In Bulanık, Erzurum, those Armenian families that had migrated to Russia came back to resettle at their home. However, their properties were invaded or given to Muslim muhajirs from the Caucasus. Since the government did not transfer muhajirs to other places Armenian families became homeless. When one of those families applied to the sub-governor the latter showed them another place to settle. They said it was better if they were given their own property and muhajir family might have been settled where the sub-governor showed but he rejected. It was harvest time and these Armenian families demanded their share from the Kurds and muhajirs who cultivated their land whose taxes had been paid by Armenians. The correspondent who relays the incident asks:

“Who will solve the land problem? Who will meet Armenians’ just demands? Recently the government wanted to establish a muhajir village on the lands of Armenian village Yoncalu. The Armenian villagers opposed, and did not let it happen. We hear the same statements: ‘Armenians

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<sup>341</sup> *Putanya*, March 24, 1910, No: 9, p. 104.

<sup>342</sup> *Putanya*, June 10, 1910, No: 17, p.201.

are disobedient and demanding'. Does defending your existence mean to be demanding?"<sup>343</sup>

He says that land disputes had become a 'Gordian knot' for the government but the government itself was guilty of this situation because officials did avoid offending Kurdish chiefs and also they overlooked the transgressions by immigrants, they did not set limits to the immigrants.<sup>344</sup>

In another instance, again in Erzurum, the attempts to give back extorted lands to the genuine owner caused an interesting plot. A Kurdish village in Pasin named Sheik Yusuf, had invaded some lands belonging to the neighboring Armenian village, Dodi. After the constitution was restored, they were supposed to give them back but some 'dark forces' tried to provoke the enmity between two villages in order to keep the land at the side of Sheik Yusuf village and also "harm the constitutional regime". Someone opened the grave of a holy figure respected as a saint by the Kurds of Sheik Yusuf and took his remaining body parts and so they violated the sacredness of the grave. The Kurds thought that this was a deliberate hostile action by the Armenians from Dodi. One of the Kurds, Esad Efendi, led others to complain to the governor. At the end of the investigation it was understood that this was a plot organized by Esad Efendi himself in order to increase the tension and enmity between the two villages and accordingly prevent the restitution of the aforementioned lands. He was arrested.<sup>345</sup>

As the reports mentioned above point out, the land disputes occurred not only between Armenians and Caucasian/Balkan immigrants but also between Armenian

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<sup>343</sup> M. Pet, "The pains of Bulanik", *Haratch*, Aug. 4, 1909, No: 19, p. 3.

<sup>344</sup> M. Pet, "The Situation of Bulanik", *Haratch*, Aug. 21, 1909, No: 24, p. 2.

<sup>345</sup> *Haratch*, Dec. 18, 1909, No: 58, p. 3.

communities and local individual oppressors. For example, in Nor Kugh (New Village) in the vicinity of Adapazarı only five Armenian households remained in April 1911 out of 38-40 households that had existed few years before. Others moved to surrounding villages due to Yörük Mehmed Agha's repression. He had lent small amounts of money to those Armenians at the heaviest interest rates and later when they could not pay back fourfold, fivefold of the capital money, he occupied their houses and lands even without applying to legal procedure; and since Armenians were seen as the official owners of the properties, they continued to pay the taxes for them. It is said that Mehmed Agha not only seized the houses and fields of the village but also intervened to people's familial life. Sometimes, marriages could be made only by his will and judgment. When such remarkable proofs of feudalism and despotism were seen under the nose of the capital, comments the newspaper reporting the event, who knows what had been happening in the far corners of Anatolia.<sup>346</sup> As a justification of this statement, similar news is relayed also from remoter places. In Eleshkirt, Erzurum, it is reported that the Armenian villages of Kupkhsan (Բուփխսան), Zipo (Ջիբօ), Mangasar (Մանկասար), Khidr (Խըրըր), Shabo (Շաբօ) were invaded by Kurdish *beys* during the bloody days, and still held.<sup>347</sup> In Moush a certain Khachig Mardigian from a village called Krdakom, who had emigrated to Hınıs three years before the constitution because of oppressions, turned back to his home, planning to live of the income of his land there. He went to the registrar's office to register the lands onto his name from his father's. However, he saw that Mustafa Agha, a notable of that locality, known also as Chacho, had registered the lands onto his name through bribery and cultivated them in the absence

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<sup>346</sup> "Land Extortions", *Putanya*, April 20, 1911, No: 10, p. 406, 407.

<sup>347</sup> Boghos Muradian, "On Land Issue", *Haratch*, Aug. 4, 1909, No: 19, p. 3.



of Khachig. Although he objected the situation the officials at the registry did not accept and referred him to the court if he would like.<sup>348</sup>

The examples are easy to multiply: a certain Hovhannes Derderian and his friend Artin Sheherian from Ulash, Sivas, were insulted and beaten by a group of Turks abetted by a local despot Rushti Bey, who had seized Hovhannes' land and wanted to deter him from following up the case. It is said that *they especially insulted their faith and religion*.<sup>349</sup> Again in Ulash (Karlıyurt) a certain Naka Ali invaded a piece of land belonging to Arakel and Andon Kulakogian. Complaints to officials did not produce any result.<sup>350</sup>

An event in one of the villages of Erzurum especially demonstrates the extent to which land disputes could go violent and horrific. There was a similar conflict as those mentioned above between some Kurdish despots and Armenian inhabitants of the village called Kakarlu. Upon the appeal of the Armenian villagers, the government took back the lands from the Kurdish agha and gave it back to the villagers. Afterwards, agha's son with his men, to take revenge, one night crept into the village and beheaded a certain Khachadur Safarian who had been the son of one of the petitioners to the government. Leaving aside the fact that murderers were caught they rumored that those who killed the young one were Armenian *fedais*. According to the correspondent the local government did not show enough effort and enthusiasm to arrest the perpetrators. Armenians protested, complained and were still waiting for a result.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> *Haratch*, Sept. 25, 1909, No: 34, p. 3.

<sup>349</sup> Asub, "Is this constitution?", *Antranik*, March 14, 1909, No: 8, p. 1.

<sup>350</sup> Asub, "Is this constitution?", *Antranik*, April 4, 1909, No: 12, p. 1.

<sup>351</sup> M. Pet, "The Situation of Bulank", *Haratch*, Aug. 21, 1909, No: 24, p. 2.

## Security Problems

In addition to land usurpations, other assaults such as robbery of movable properties and livestock, abduction, rape and homicide, as factors increasing the inter-communal tension, find a large space on the pages of provincial Armenian press. Almost in every issue of newspapers there is a bunch of news reporting the attack against Armenians, mostly villagers. For example, in June 1911 in a single issue of *Iris* from Tokat three such incidents are reported in one of which a policeman beat an Armenian to the death. In a fourth event, this time three Armenians wounded a Muslim.<sup>352</sup> Two weeks later the same newspaper reports another two attacks in Bitlis, this time eight Armenians, including one cleric, were killed. A notable from Kurdish Bedri tribe was accused of being one of the perpetrators. Upon this, the Armenian Patriarchate once again applied to the Supreme Port for the punishment of Kurdish *beys* who became “a calamity over Anatolia”. Otherwise, it would have not been possible to reestablish peace.<sup>353</sup>

Similarly, Erzurum newspaper *Haratch* reports assaults in different districts of the province. A telegram from Eleshkirt reports that in the village of Hıdır (Karakilise, Beyazıt) a certain Molla Huseyin and his men, by the encouragement of Hamidiye captain Rızvan Beg, assaulted Avedis Hovhannesian’s house on June 3, 1909 and wounded him and seven of his relatives seriously. Because of indifference and inactivity of the sub-governor (*kaymakam*) the criminals did not face any prosecution. Encouraged by this, more than 100 Kurds assaulted again the aforementioned man’s house. Upon this, Armenians applied to the local commander

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<sup>352</sup> *Iris*, June 1, 1911, No: 6, p. 8, 9.

<sup>353</sup> *Iris*, June 15, 1911, No: 7, p. 5.

to send military force; and the prelate wrote a petition to the government. On the same days this happened, three Armenians were also assaulted in Pakasic, one of the villages of Tercan, by six Muslims, while grazing their herd. One was killed, two were seriously wounded. Four of the criminals were caught. The correspondents reports that people were impatiently waiting to see how justice would work in a constitutional country.<sup>354</sup>

Another incident especially illustrates the impotence and reluctance of the security forces to provide public order. On the June 10, 1909, Krikor Babikian from Hekebad (Pasin, Erzurum) village was assaulted by three Kurds and beaten severely; his three pairs of oxen were also taken away. The villagers applied the sub-governor of Hasankale for the arrest of perpetrators. Gendarmeries searched them for a while but could not find and advised the villagers to catch and punish the criminals by themselves. Upon this *Haratch*, the newspaper reporting the event, comments: “Many villages of Pasin are still under the pressure of Kurdish tribes. The word freedom has not been heard here yet. Armenians are not living freely even within the limits of their village.”<sup>355</sup>

Although one can argue that at those times a general lack of security and absence of rule of law were prevailing across Anatolia, Armenians thought that there was a special and systematic indifference to provide justice if victims were Armenians. According to the narratives of assaults against Armenians in the Armenian press in nine out of ten cases attackers were either not detected or not caught or not prosecuted justly. So much so that, a newspaper asked, upon assaults on Armenians in Harput and Siirt, whether there will be an end to the “agony and

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<sup>354</sup> *Haratch*, June 9, 1909, No: 3, p. 4.

<sup>355</sup> *Haratch*, July 3, 1909, No: 10, p. 4.

martyrdom of poor Armenians”, especially those living in the deep towns of provinces.<sup>356</sup> But not only them, others leaving in western regions might have faced similar situations. In Sapanca on December 24, 1910 a certain Osgiyani Efendi and his sons were beaten by Laz immigrants. They found immigrants’ animals in their field grazing and while taking the animals to the municipality Laz immigrants, clubs and knives in their hands, beat them almost to the death. The police was accused of being late to initiate any judicial procedure about this event. Upon the relaying of this news by *Putanya* newspaper the governor sent a telegram to the *kaymakam* of Adapazarı to learn whether the event was true and check whether no action had been taken against the perpetrators. *Kaymakam*, after an examination in Sapanca, replied that the perpetrators were punished to pay 116 *kurush*. However, *Putanya* interprets this fine as a “joke”, implying that this punishment was far from being satisfactory deterrent.<sup>357</sup>

Absence of justice is a theme that is frequently referred by Armenian commentators upon offences against Armenians. For instance, an author questions “How are criminals punished?” after an incident of robbery. An Armenian young man was beaten and robbed on the way to Duzce. He recognized the perpetrator, a certain Kamil who had been arrested and jailed in Duzce whereas he had to be jailed in Adapazarı according to preceding examples. Anyway, he was released shortly and started to wander around freely. The author asks, “Is this the justice that new-born free Turkey is proud of?” He adds that the government machine in Duzce was still in the hand of local notables (*eşraf*) rather than the government officials who are expected to be the provider of justice and equality. It was surprising to see, for the

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<sup>356</sup> *Iris*, June 1, 1911, No: 6, p. 7.

<sup>357</sup> *Putanya*, Jan. 10, 1910, No: 25, p. 508.

commentator, that the minister of interior could not expand administrative and judicial reforms to places so close to the capital. “If such sad comedies happen under Istanbul’s nose who knows what could happen in more remote places?”<sup>358</sup> The youngster, Hayk Salirain, who had been beaten by Circassian Kamil Bey eventually died within a month or so although the perpetrator was still free. This situation is regarded as unacceptable and asked once again: “Is this the justice that will govern in constitutional Turkey?”<sup>359</sup>

According to an editorial of *Putanya* Anatolia was sick of injustice. The news about murders, crimes had been pouring into the capital each day.

“Turkey had been named as ‘sick man’... The re-promulgation of Ottoman constitution eliminated the conditions to use this statement. It was the greatest and ablest doctor, all eyes turned to it, and it became the source of all hopes. [However,] that doctor has made only dressing but no essential treatment. And today, three long years later, this big country’s, Ottoman fatherland’s chest, Anatolia, is again wounded and infected. The future of Turkey is Anatolia. If Anatolia gets peaceful Turkey will be saved”.<sup>360</sup>

In sum, perennial problems of land disputes, public security and absence of rule of law continued to exist heavily after the promulgation of the constitution as the biggest impediments for peaceful cohabitation of communities. This kind of disputes that had an economic/material base might have easily had a sort of “multiplier effect” on ethno-religious conflict as in the stressful atmosphere aroused by land disputes and other security problems ethnic/religious identity of the parties, especially of the weaker one, could become an immediate and easy target for the opponents. Hence, one can observe that those who invaded the land belonging to the Armenians or

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<sup>358</sup> Ashod, “How are criminals punished?”, *Putanya*, Dec. 1, 1910, No: 29, p. 320.

<sup>359</sup> *Putanya*, Jan. 20, 1911, No: 3, p. 357, 358.

<sup>360</sup> Editorial, “Sick Anatolia”, *Putanya*, June 11, 1911, No: 15, p. 441, 442.

commit any other extortion on them did also frequently insult the Armenian religion. In this way they tried to in some sense legitimize their unlawful deeds by emphasizing the cultural difference of the victim. Expressing same thing in a more general or theoretical fashion, as Michael Mann states, whenever ethnic differences entwine other social differences and where ethnonationalism can capture other senses of exploitation it becomes stronger.<sup>361</sup> After a point it becomes almost impossible to differentiate whether what is lived through is a economic or cultural conflict; or which one is cause which one is effect. Moreover, the longer these problems remain unsolved the bigger is the damage they cause. In our case, for instance, the Armenians lost their trust in the new constitutional regime due to enduring land disputes, besides other problems. As a matter of fact, Ahmet Sherif, as one of his observations during his visit almost two years after the revolution, relays that Armenians of the eastern provinces felt sad and desperate because of continuous stall in land usurpations since these problems had not been solved for a long time; and he warns that hopelessness and sorrow might turn into an important force. So, the government had to understand that it had been already time, even late to solve this problem once and for all. Otherwise, he adds, within a short time there would be no indication of government in the eastern provinces.<sup>362</sup>

### Fraternity of Protocol

Although news coverage of Anatolian Armenian press during three to four years after the Revolution does not point to easy and harmonious relations among

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<sup>361</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 5.

<sup>362</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanın* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 332.

communities, one can observe a formal harmony and coexistence during some special events like official celebrations of particular days such as the anniversary of the constitution or ascending of the sultan to the throne or opening of a club. For instance, in the opening of the first parliament after the Revolution separate places were reserved for Muslim and Christian clerics but the former invited the latter to sit with them; so that, the symbolic realization of the fraternity was achieved.<sup>363</sup> More specifically speaking, in such celebrations it was minded to have the representatives of each community present, be it clerical figures or officials of political parties or other notables in the social and economic life of that locality. Moreover, in such occasions almost all speakers emphasized the importance of harmony, fraternity, and cooperation of communities. The celebration of the second anniversary of Mehmed Reshad's ascending to the throne in Izmit is a typical example of these cases. The representatives of all communities, students and teachers, political parties and social clubs participated in the celebration. After the prayer by the mufti, the representatives of the CUP, the Club of Immigrants (*Muhacir Kulübü*), Circassian Club (*Çerkez Kulübü*), the ARF (*Tashnaksutyun*), the leaders of Armenian, Greek, and Jewish communities read their messages. Sub-governor (*kaymakam*) Sırrı Bey said that the development of Turkey depended on the harmony and cooperation of all nations, and those working against the harmony of the Ottoman elements had to be opposed. After the ceremonies, Sırrı Bey and the military commander (a major) visited the ARF Club while the representatives of the clubs of the CUP, immigrants, and Circassians were also present. These visitors praised the moral and intellectual

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<sup>363</sup> Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (New York, London: C. Scribner's sons; T. F. Unwin, 1909), 199.

features of the Armenian nation and especially the works of the ARF that were so beneficial for the society.<sup>364</sup>

The ceremony in Tokat organized for the third anniversary of the announcement of the constitution also reflected a similar picture of “harmonious inter-communality”. The Armenian Prelate, with a group of Armenian students from communal schools, participated in the ceremony held at the front of government office. He made a speech in Turkish in which he emphasized the importance of justice for the existence of a state. Same day, as a returning visit, the *mutasarrıf* with his followers, the mayor with a group of notables, four representatives from the Committee of Union and Progress, and some public officials made a visit to the prelate.<sup>365</sup> Given that they delivered the return visit on the same day and with a large group there must be sensitivity on the side of government officials to keep relations with Armenian institutions smooth at least in appearance. Not only during celebrations of national events but also in ‘smaller’ occasions at a local level it was cared to include the representative of communities as in the banquet given by the mayor of Erzurum for the honor of the Fourth Army commander *Mushir İbrahim Pasha* on June 10, 1909. The mayor also invited the prelates of Apostolic and Catholic Armenians as the representatives of their communities.<sup>366</sup>

In reciprocating, Armenians were also careful to invite civilian-military authorities and the representatives of other communities in the events they organized for different reasons. For instance, *Hnchak Club* in *Zara* was officially opened on May 23 in the presence of *kaymakam* *Necip Nadir Bey* (who made a speech praising

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<sup>364</sup> *Putanya*, April 20, 1911, No: 10, p. 407.

<sup>365</sup> *Iris*, July 15, 1911, No: 9, p. 6.

<sup>366</sup> *Haratch*, June 12, 1909, No: 4, p. 4.



party's approach and mentality, and said that no one should have suspected of the party), "Hakim Bey", mufti, military representatives, and Turkish and Armenian notables, including a *Tashnak* representative.<sup>367</sup> Other Armenian institutions also followed the same sensitivity. On January 1, 1910 a ceremony was organized at the Armenian school of Erzurum to celebrate the new year. Invitations were also sent to Turkish and Kurdish notables of the town. Among the attendants were the *kaymakam*, the commander captain of the local military force, the district revenue officer (*mal müdürü*), the mayor, the secretary and member of the local court, Sheik Sadık, notables of the town Abdulkazade Emin and Cemal Efendi. The priest Der Minassian opened the night with the prayer in Armenian (*Hayr Mer*) after which another Armenian priest prayed in Turkish this time. Various speeches, songs and poems in Armenian and Turkish followed. *Kaymakam* also gave a talk in which he emphasized the importance and indispensability of harmony between Turks and Armenians. The mayor and judge also gave speeches.<sup>368</sup>

This shows that after the constitution everybody was careful not to present a scene contradictory to the discourses of the fraternity frequently repeated. This might be interpreted as efforts to save face while real, structural conflicts among communities were persisting. When one combines this fraternity of protocols with the data of property and security problems what Simic says for the Bosnian context might be also used to describe the situation in Anatolia: "superficial cordiality, more often than not masked a deep sense of alienation, suspicion, and fear".<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> G. Asadurian, "Opening Ceremony of Zara Hnchakian Club", *Antranik*, June 12, 1910, No: 69, p. 3; G. Asadurian, "Opening Ceremony of Zara Hnchakian Club", *Antranik*, June 19, 1910, No: 70, p. 2.

<sup>368</sup> A. Mihranian, "New Year", *Haratch*, Jan. 19, 1910, No: 5, p. 2,3.

<sup>369</sup> Simic, "Nationalism as Folk Ideology: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," 115.

## Armenians' Ideas about Neighbor Communities: Immigrants

It is obvious that there was a general tension lingering in the air between Armenian communities and both immigrant groups, settled in different parts of Anatolia, and Kurdish tribes. Contemporary Armenian authors, political figures and opinion leaders made some analyses about the reasons and possible solutions of the problem between Armenians and Muslim communities. Let us look first at their ideas about the immigrants.

Muslim immigration waves from the Balkans and Caucasia accelerating especially in the second half of the nineteenth century caused a dramatic demographic and sociological change in Anatolia. According to one study, five to seven million refugees settled in the Ottoman Empire between 1783 and 1913,<sup>370</sup> which was a quite big number to digest easily. Kemal Karpat also agrees that up to 7 million refugees were settled throughout nineteenth century in Anatolia. He adds that by the time of World War I nearly 40% of Anatolian population was immigrants.<sup>371</sup> Understandably, newcomers and natives had problems in sharing resources. When one considers the categorical hate of Muslim immigrants against Christians<sup>372</sup> due to oppression and killings they had faced at the hand of local Christians in their native lands, the tension between them and Anatolian Armenians as a Christian community becomes easier to grasp. These immigrants brought with them their discontent, collective memory of ethnic and religious conflict, and the feeling of revenge whose

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<sup>370</sup> Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 58.

<sup>371</sup> K. Karpat, *The Politization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 184.

<sup>372</sup> For an example of hard relations between Anatolian Christian, in this case Rums, and Muslims from the Balkans or islands like Crete see Doumanis, *Before the Nation*, 136–142.

target was native non-Muslims into Anatolia. They settled alliances with the local Muslim power holders on the basis of their religious identity.<sup>373</sup>

It seems that on the one hand Anatolian Armenians were not happy with the increasing number of immigrants; but on the other hand they were aware that that was a reality which they could not change or stop but had to live with. At the same time, they made comparison between Ottoman Armenians, including those had emigrated abroad, and Muslim immigrants and tried to show that Armenians as a group would have been more beneficial or valuable for the economic well-being of the country. One Armenian commentator from Izmit says that he was not interested in government's political aims in settling these people. He assumes that this was necessary in the name of humanity since those people had been oppressed where they had lived. However, he questions whether only Muslims had been oppressed in other countries and why people of other religions and ethnicities had not been allowed to immigrate into the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, while the government had allocated a large amount of money for these "foreign" Muslim immigrants, Ottoman Armenians, as the "natives" of the country, who had been persecuted and whose properties had been occupied, were still waiting for justice. "How [then] can we believe that justice and equality rule in Turkey and Muslims and Christians are equal in front of law and state? Believing requires evidence."<sup>374</sup> He claims that those (officials, politicians) who worried about the economic development of the country should have imagined how the Ottoman Armenians, who had migrated to Europe and America, could contribute to the economic development of the country if they came back and

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<sup>373</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 287.

<sup>374</sup> Ashod Bazbazian, "Economic Development and the Issue of Immigration", *Putanya*, Oct. 1, 1910, No: 26, p. 278.

resettled in their homeland. 100 Armenians of this kind would have been more beneficial for the country than thousands of Bosnian, Tatar, Circassians immigrants given that those Armenians had worked in the factories of Europe and America. Their experience might have increased economic productivity sharply. The author also claims that these Muslim immigrants, leave being productive aside, had extorted and exploited the properties of productive people. “These immigrants have the right to live in this country and they are welcome as long as they live in accordance with the constitutional regime even if they have no share in the economic development of the country”.<sup>375</sup>

#### Armenians’ Ideas about Neighbor Communities: Kurds

The other group, as seen through the incidents mentioned above, with whom Anatolian Armenians, especially in the eastern provinces, had been clashing frequently was Kurds. So, the question “what shall we do with the Kurds?” is one of the frequent topics of the articles or debates. In most of the analyses done by Armenian authors, Kurds are depicted as “semi-savage”, “barbaric”, or at best “uneducated” people. They were still leaving in a feudal order which did harm not only themselves but also Armenians. According to this way of thinking as long as Kurds continued to live in ignorance and feudalism Armenians, too, would continue to suffer from them. Accordingly, there were some suggestions from Armenian commentators to help Kurds in coming out of the “dark ages” which would also be beneficial for both Armenians and the rest of the country. One author, commenting about the Kurds in Hınıs, Erzurum, says that the majority of them were so ignorant

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 279.

that they did not know even reading and writing. Their ignorance was also a risk for the future of the new regime since it was not possible to make uneducated people understand some important political principles and concepts such as constitution, equality, and justice. It would be unrealistic to expect them contribute to the development of Ottoman fatherland. “Give them light, education; within one or two decades they, as a brisk and strong race, will be able to contribute to our fatherland.”<sup>376</sup> Another author writing from Van also has similar contentions. He claims Kurds were uneducated, ignorant and accustomed to live through pillage, so they had a natural affinity to sword and blood. As long as they remained uneducated, “uncivilized” they would continue killing and plundering Armenians. Moreover, he claims, the encouragement they saw from the tyrant (Abdulhamid) convinced them that peaceful, hard-working people had to feed them for free and forever. It was unacceptable for Kurdish *aghas* that the constitution brought equality for Christians. In those circumstances ordinary Kurds, who were always ready to assault Armenians, were a very suitable tool for those who wanted to continue their despotic rule. The author foresees that although some Young Turks had sincerely tried to establish the constitutional regime, it would not be possible to found it on a firm and stable basis unless they considered the problem of ‘the Kurdish enlightenment’ seriously. He continues:

“Let us educate Kurds, improve their knightly characteristic, eliminate their negative instincts, and try to sow the seed of virtue, goodness, and beauty. Then we can be sure that the Kurd, becoming decent by heart and soul, will present real services to his fatherland.”<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Arshak Tutuncian, “Hinis: Educational Situation”, *Haratch*, Aug. 25, 1909, No: 25, p. 3.

<sup>377</sup> Adrag, “Calamity of A(di)lcevaz”, *Haratch*, Nov. 10, 1909, No: 47, p. 2, 3.

According to many comments in this endeavor of enlightening Kurds, Armenians should have taken a responsibility and help them. For example, Armenians could assist them in overcoming illiteracy which was a major problem among Kurds. As a matter of fact, an Armenian named Hrachia from Hınıs, Erzurum, prepared a primer to teach Kurds reading Kurdish in Armenian scripts, whose topics were derived from “pure Kurdish life”; and *Haratch* newspaper would publish and distribute it in hope of helping the expansion of education among the Kurds and “putting them on the way of civilization”.<sup>378</sup>

Indeed, the civilizing role that Armenians ascribed to themselves is not restricted with Kurds. In the division of labor among communities most of the Armenians regarded their own community as a mediator between modern, civilized world (Europe) and other Ottoman communities, i.e. Muslims. This was because of their better education and more close relations with Europe as articulated in the words of an Armenian commentator:

“Due to our position and occupation we have had more opportunity to contact with Europeans and their civilization. Therefore, the Armenians should first provide their inner harmony and later perform the duty of mediator between European nations and our Turkish brothers. This is, besides being a mission, also a glory for us. The fate of our nation is so commanded that we should live agreeably and gladly with the Turks and also other communities living in Turkey...Only through this way that we can have the best position in the economic and moral life of this beautiful country”<sup>379</sup>

The other role Armenians ascribed to themselves in the inter-ethnic division of labor was being engaged in manufacture, trade, and science because they had faced

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<sup>378</sup> *Haratch*, June 12, 1909, No: 4, p. 4. However, we do not have the definite information about whether this plan was implemented.

<sup>379</sup> K. Metzadurian, “The Boons of the Constitution”, *Antranik*, May 23, 1909, No: 19, p. 2.

political persecution and been excluded from politics for centuries they developed skills in these areas. It would be better using these skills both for themselves and the whole country.<sup>380</sup>

#### Further Acquaintance and Dialogue for Peaceful Coexistence

For the peace and harmony between communities one of the suggestions was to know each other more. According to this perspective, communities had been living side by side but did not know each other well enough; and Armenians had had their own share of responsibility in this, since they had not showed considerable interest and effort to get familiar with the neighboring communities more. This view criticizes the Armenians of not learning much about the life, history and culture of their neighbors. With this motivation and in order to close the gap *Haratch* initiated a series of articles under the headline of “Our Neighbors” in which general information about the history and culture of neighboring communities would be presented. They started with Kurds. In the first article theories about the origin of Kurdish people formulated by foreign scholars are given.<sup>381</sup> In the following issues Kurdish tribal structure is explained and general information about some tribes is given.<sup>382</sup> After Kurds, they started to publish about *Yezidis* and their culture.<sup>383</sup> Additionally, there is also an effort to understand and describe “Turks” as another group of people with whom the destiny of Armenians was tied. According to one remark, Turks were

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<sup>380</sup> K. Anbarcian, “My Sugestions”, *Antranik*, March 27, 1910, No: 58, p. 1, 2.

<sup>381</sup> *Haratch*, May 31, 1909, No: 1, p. 4.

<sup>382</sup> *Haratch*, June 19, 1909, No: 5, p. 2. *Haratch*, June 23, 1909, No: 7, p. 2, 3.

<sup>383</sup> *Haratch*, July 14, 1909, No: 13, p. 2.

neither “unbelievably kind and civilized” as some said in the first days of the Revolution nor “blood-thirsty barbarians” again as some described after the Adana events; both were extreme interpretations. “Let us not exaggerate but try to understand with whom we have been living for centuries and will still live.” Same author argues that, contrary to the dominant view about the Turks in Europe, they were not incapable of being civilized. On the contrary, they were willing to take advantage of European civilization, and progress. Afterwards, he tries to explain why the Turks remain historically undeveloped. He, in reference to Leon Cahun, goes back to the nomadic life of the Turks in Central Asia and he associates their backwardness with the nomadic culture whose fingerprints were still seen among them.<sup>384</sup> He continues with giving a history of the Turks who, after accepting Islam, made important contributions to science and civilization.<sup>385</sup> For much of the last fifty years (since 1860s) they had entered the “third stage” in which they were under the influence of Europe. Later he summarizes the Ottoman reform movements of nineteenth century.<sup>386</sup> So, this might seem strange or unexpected for some but we have here an Armenian trying to prove that the Turks can become “civilized”!

*Haratch* also announces in its first issue that for the sake of reconciliation and dialogue, from time to time, would publish supplements in Turkish and Kurdish because cooperation, mutual help and understanding among communities was essential for peace and development.<sup>387</sup> Famous novelist and story writer Yervant Srmakeshkanlian (Yerughan) wrote an article in Constantinople Armenians

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<sup>384</sup> L. Pasbanian, “Our Neighbors: Turks and Progress”, *Haratch*, June 19, 1909, No: 6, p. 2, 3.

<sup>385</sup> L. Pasbanian, “Our Neighbors: Turks and Progress”, *Haratch*, June 23, 1909, No: 7, p. 2.

<sup>386</sup> L. Pasbanian, “Our Neighbors: Turks and Progress”, *Haratch*, June 26, 1909, No: 8, p. 3.

<sup>387</sup> Editorial, “Our Aim”, *Haratch*, May 31, 1909, No: 1, p. 1.



newspaper, *Arevelk*, praising these efforts of *Haratch*. This was exactly what should have been done according to him because it was very important to present Armenians' feeling, thoughts, pains, and aims directly to the Muslims in a language that they could read and understand. He even claims that if Armenians had had an organ published in Turkish the Adana disaster would have not happened. It was an embarrassment for Armenian newspapers of Constantinople that such an attempt came from a provincial newspaper since they did this although they did not possess even the half of opportunities of Istanbul Armenians.<sup>388</sup> Unmediated and direct dialogue between communities was critical for the political stability of the country because, as an Armenians lawyer from Sivas says, “(We) should understand each other without the mediation of foreigners since this mediation might turn into intervention which may give way to many unpleasant results”.<sup>389</sup>

As a result, those Armenians suggest more dialogue and contact among communities to provide and maintain the internal peace. The more peoples knew each other, they thought, the more they would get rid of prejudices and doubts about each other.

### Land Reform for Peace

Surely, however, the land question and other security problems, which were devastating ethnic relations, could not be solved by only more dialogue and acquaintance between communities since these had a very deep reasons related to social, political, and legal structure. So, it necessitates some political actions by the

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<sup>388</sup> Yerughan, 'Free Opinions', *Haratch*, Aug. 18, 1909, No: 23, p. 1, 2.

<sup>389</sup> K. Metzadurian, “Long Live Ottoman Constitution! Long Live Freedom! Long Live Solidarity”, *Antranik*, July 11, 1909, No: 27-28, p. 1.

government. One of the directors of *Tashnak* Party Harutyun Shahrigian (Adom), lawyer in profession, published a book, “Governmental Reform and Land Question” in 1910, in which he handles the reasons and solutions of land question in detail. He diagnoses feudalism and Kurdish tribal culture as the most important reason of land and security problems. He says that for the creation of new “Turkey”, for governmental reformation and the security of the constitution, feudalism had to be eradicated. Moreover, feudalism in Turkey was different from European (historical) version; it was more “underdeveloped” in the sense that it did not recognize legal-institutional privileges, did not circumscribe the Palace as an element of check and balance, or held offices in imperial structure. It was “wild, primitive, nomadic and tribal”.<sup>390</sup>

He describes the situation in the eastern provinces with a wide reference to an official report prepared by the governorship of Bitlis and presented to the Ministry of Interior. This report mentions that some Armenian villages, in order to be free from arbitrary oppression, brought a Kurdish *gha* by themselves into their village, and had been living under his protection. It was not possible to collect tax or punish criminals without the help of these *ghas*. Those “feudal lords” who felt themselves powerful enough attacked neighboring villages, took away their livestock and crop to expand their sway territorially. As a result, robbery, murder, or injuring people were daily routines. The report says:

“For Kurds there were no difference between cutting a chicken’s throat and killing a human; life is so cheap...Kurds who did not commit homicide or participate to plunder were rare. Eight Kurds out of ten have been being accused of killing or causing injury or robbery. Many of them were

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<sup>390</sup> Harutyun Shahrigian, *Petakan Veranorogut’iwnn u Hoghayin Harts* (K. Polis: Tparan A. Shahēn, 1910), 5.

sentenced in their absence; but all have been living comfortably in their villages.”<sup>391</sup>

It continues by saying that for Kurdish children and youngsters, who had not had any opportunity for education but always seen wild examples, bearing arms and doing banditry were the sole source of glory and honor. Thus, at this point, the views of Bitlis governorship and some Armenian authors on Kurds and their culture overlap.

Although the report says that state officials had been registering extorted lands into the name of usurpers in the exchange of bribes as “small” as a pot of butter during old regime, Shahrighian claims that nothing had changed during the new regime either. More truly, the real problem was not solved because the essential cure had not been applied.<sup>392</sup> Still, feudal lords were controlling who would be elected to local administrative and judicial offices. Even if those who were not approved by them were elected they could not stay at the office very long. The new regime, let alone punishing those who committed crime during the old regime, purported to present them as freedom fighters against despotism and attempted to save them through a general amnesty. Thus, even those who had been convicted before for their cruelties were forgiven by the constitutional regime.<sup>393</sup> In order to make a comparison between the old and the new regimes Shahrighian asks some yes/no questions:

“Have real authors of formal and informal plunder and crimes been punished? No  
Have the extorted properties been given back? No

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 10, 11.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 15, 16.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 20–23.

Have illegal, fake registrations and testimonies been erased?

No

Have *aghas*, their grandchildren (*torun*), *beys*, and notables been continuing their authorship and influence? Yes

Have the working people still been the subject of feudal will, order and influence? Yes”<sup>394</sup>

Since feudalism was based on the economic slavery and exploitation of peasant masses, Shahrighian continues, giving political rights and freedom on paper could not be sufficient for their salvation but they had to have also their economic freedom which was possible only through land reform. Moreover, political reform cannot live long without economic reform. Political reform would be open to continuous risks and threats unless infrastructural economic reforms were put into practice; they are “inseparable twins”. In addition, in the conditions of Turkey, an economic reform would not be possible without solving the land question.<sup>395</sup>

Shahrighian, after mentioning that, like the commission mentioned above, land extortions and illegal acts were not particular or sporadic but systematic through administrative mechanisms, contends that such a massive problem could not be solved through courts or judicial measures. Governmental-administrative illegalities could be cured again through governmental measures. Individual usurpers were just instruments of the government but at the same time they utilized administrative defects. None of the civil servants and bureaucrats in the courts or cadaster registry, who were themselves were a part of the problem, could solve it. Constitutional regime should have focused on this problem seriously; otherwise nobody would believe that there was a difference between the old and the new regimes.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 35–37.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 61–63.

Tribal-nomadic feudalism was the biggest obstacle for the solution of land question which was in turn the most important barrier on the way of economic reform without which political reform could not persist. Physically unsettled human groups cannot work and live peacefully; nomadic life, whose ideals were gun and plunder, was inherently aggressive. Therefore, first, this type of feudalism should have been broken. This could be done by distributing land to individual tribe members and rescue them from the economic slavery under the yoke of their chiefs. There were also some other measures proposed by Shahrigian in order to eradicate tribal feudalism. These were

- a) abolishment of Hamidiye regiments,
- b) detaching tribal chiefs from their tribes and transporting them to far places for permanent settlement where they would live through their own labor working on land given to them,
- c) distributing reasonable amount of land to settled peasants, abolishing those title deed that were given by illegal methods, taking back extorted lands through illegal and violent methods,
- d) no more immigrants should have been settled unless the needs of permanent ploughmen were met and until real free lands were found and also dislodge those who were already settled and settle them to where there was enough and free land.<sup>397</sup>

To sum up, Armenians proposed immediate implementation of the rule of law, reform in security forces and judicial system, more dialogue among communities, education of Kurds, termination of feudal-nomadic system for more peaceful

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 64–66.

relations between communities and accordingly a healthy and hopeful future of the constitutional regime.

#### An Attempt to Interpret the Situation

Despite all, it would not be consistent with reality to claim that only Armenians had been suffering from land extortions. Ordinary Kurdish peasants, for example, also were exposed to land seizures. At least in one example, a group of Kurds approached during *selamlık* the sultan to complain that their and Armenians' land had been invaded by Kör Hüseyin Pasha and his son Ado Bey. Their approach was so abrupt that horses shied and one of the officers broke his arm by falling from his horse. Kurds were first arrested because of the turmoil they caused, but later released and the petition they gave was taken into consideration.<sup>398</sup> Here we see that Kurdish peasants were complaining in the name of also Armenian peasants due to a common problem they had.

Another incident from Diyarbekir especially shows that it is not always possible to observe a consistent, stable scene whose actors are clearly divided into two: Kurds as oppressors and Armenians as desperate victims. There sometimes might have been some grey zones, more complicated situations. The event which makes us think in this way is that Kurdish peasants from a village called *Sinne*, in *Lice*, were threatened by a certain Mahmud Bey who wanted to extort a certain part of their crop in the fall of 1909 as he had done every year till that time. Upon this, these Kurdish peasants applied to the sub-governor of Lice but since he was a relative of Mahmud Bey he did nothing. Then the peasants tried to convey their

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<sup>398</sup> *Iris*, May 15, 1911, No: 5, p. 8. It is not specified in the news that where the Kurds came from.

complaint against the governor through the mediation of the local body of the *Tashnaksutyun*.<sup>399</sup> Although we do not know whether this initiative did produce any result, in this example some aggrieved Kurds tried to find justice through an Armenian agent, which they could not find through a state agent.

Some contemporary Armenian commentators were also very aware of that inequality in land distribution and oppression were problems of all provinces and people. For example, Shahrigain in his book mentioned above, states that although Armenian peasants were the group that was affected by land extortions most, Muslim peasants were also suffering from land deprivation and accordingly from poverty. Therefore, it was natural that they would also take the advantage of land reform.<sup>400</sup> Others also say that hopefully in the near future all these peasants, Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish would be conscious enough to protect their rights even at the cost of their life. This was the only way to show that they were human beings equal to the class of *aghas*.<sup>401</sup> So, it was not only Armenian peasants that were suffering at the hand of despots who did not avoid invading the lands belonging to also Muslim peasants in cooperation with governmental officials.<sup>402</sup>

Similarly, in the problems with immigrants it would not be true to claim that it was only Armenians who had difficulty with them. General tension might have arisen between immigrants and other natives in some places. Indeed, this kind of situations in which different modes of production of various groups are conflict is not peculiar to the Ottoman land. For example, in North America through the nineteenth

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<sup>399</sup> Keghchuk, "A Flash of Hope", *Haratch*, Sep. 18, 1909, No: 32, p. 3.

<sup>400</sup> Shahrigian, *Petakan Veranorogut'iwnn u Hoghayin Harts*, 67.

<sup>401</sup> A. G. Tutuncian, "Hınıs: Land Seizure and Constitution", *Haratch*, Sep. 22, 1909, No: 33, p. 3.

<sup>402</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanın*, 174.

century one of the major disputes between white settlers and the natives was the occupation of the Indian lands by the white newcomers. According to the white immigrant thinking the Indian mode of production or more truly mode of subsistence, which was hunting and gathering, was wasting the land whereas these lands might have been used by farming more efficiently. Thus, they continued to deport the Indian groups and push them to the limits of the wilderness. Similarly, in South West Africa, which was a German colony in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the major source of tension was about who would own the land. The Hereros, the second largest tribal group and the biggest cattle grazers, needed very extensive land for their livestock. However, as the German colonizers expanded they wanted to have the best lands for which they did not hesitate to eliminate the Hereros physically.<sup>403</sup> The situation in the Ottoman Empire was not so different in the early twentieth century in the sense that the immigrants were largely herd owners whereas the natives were farmers. For example in Sapanca and its environs it seems that there was a general tension between Caucasian immigrants (Laz, Gürcü) and natives (Turk, Armenian, Greek) because of immigrants' livestock. According to the articulations of some natives, those immigrants were behaving like bandits. The immigrants were largely involved in stock-breeding whereas the natives were occupied with farming; and this caused a basic contradiction since immigrants' flocks needed grassland while every piece of land was sown by natives in that region. The journal, relaying this tension, advises the establishment of a joint (inter-communal) society against the illegal, cruel acts of immigrants just like it was done in Bardizag.<sup>404</sup> Also in Karaman there were serious land disputes between immigrants

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<sup>403</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 84, 101.

<sup>404</sup> *Putanya*, Jan. 10, 1910, No: 2, p. 1, 2.



and the natives which even caused some life casualties.<sup>405</sup> Immigrants had some difficulties and suffered from local despots also in Islahiye, where they were complaining that their livestock had been continuously stolen, their fields had been invaded by some local despots; and, with the latter's encouragement, native people had been insulting immigrants. They add that applying to the court did not serve the purpose because courts were completely ineffective in the face of such illegalities.<sup>406</sup> In sum, it was not only Armenians but also other native groups had problems with Balkan and Caucasian immigrants. In some cases, immigrants were the party that did suffer from injustices. In other words, in such cases the main reason of the conflict was not ethnicity or religion but contradictory mode of productions. However, very importantly, what is peculiar to and critical about the cases where plaintiffs were Armenian was that whenever, as said before, the ethnic and economic dimensions overlap the conflict becomes more fierce and religious identity of the weaker party an open target. Thus, the economic problems negatively contributed to the increase in the general level of ethno-religious enmity. Additionally, it is also a fact that, as a result of expanded, persistent and systematic illegalities in land and security issues, Ottoman Armenians thought that these, beyond being a general problem for everyone, were deliberate efforts targeting them *as a community*. They saw the solution of this kind of problems as an important condition of Armenians' integration into the political system of the Empire. As a matter of fact, the author, mentioned above, who claims that land question was a common problem of peasantry regardless of their ethno-religious identity, also says that "Kurds and Turks" plundered Armenians' land during Hamidian regime and were also still plundering during the

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<sup>405</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanîn*, 221.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, 152 ,153.

new regime. Those who had killed Armenians for more land and property during the old regime were still wandering unpunished also in those days of the constitution. Only time would show whether the constitution would protect the rights of the Armenians and return their land. He adds that only if their lands had been returned then the Armenians would have believed that they were the real children of the Ottoman fatherland.<sup>407</sup> Consequently, for these people it was not a contradiction to acknowledge and declare that Muslim peasants were also suffering from the oppression of despots and to think that Armenians were under a systematic attack coming from their neighbors as well as from despots and the state.

It is quite clear that these unsolved problems increased the inter-communal tension and amplified negative feelings among Armenians against neighboring communities. Security problems and especially land disputes became lines of cleavage along which social tension accumulated. These disputes created “open records” which were to be settled at the first opportunity, i.e. war, banishment, or massacre because, as the examples at the beginning of this section show, *what becomes critical and determinative at those times of crisis is not relations among single individuals from different communities but the social, political and legal structure in which these relations are shaped*. As a matter of fact, Ahmet Sherif, as a result of his observations in the eastern provinces in 1911, says that although there was not a clash between communities on daily basis if the land and security problems were not solved it might turn into a “fight of nations” in the near future. He describes land problems as “lava flow” which could ruin everything on its way.<sup>408</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>407</sup> A. G. Tutuncian, “Hınıs: Land Seizure and Constitution”, *Haratch*, Sep. 22, 1909, No: 33, p. 3.

<sup>408</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanın*, 338, 344.

when examining the relations between Armenians and other communities land and security problems should be given a central role.

In sum, under the light of contemporary texts the social relations between Armenian community and Muslim communities of the Empire during the second constitutional period cannot be described as peaceful, harmonious or easy-going. This does not mean that all Armenian and Muslim individuals and institutions were clearly demarcated from each other, having no contact or being in actual fight. On the contrary, there were some domains, organizations and practices where individuals from different communities were involved together. Beside jubiliations just after the Revolution, for example, in formal celebrations, meetings and ceremonies the representatives of communities stood side by side. However, there were real, structural-legal problems taken over from previous times and generations such as land usurpations or absence of the rule of law that were continuously tensing up the inter-communal relations. A problem which had a material base might be used as a tool in “the otherization” of Armenian identity given the examples mentioned above in which religious differences of communities were provoked or Armenians’ faith became subject of insult. Indeed, this atmosphere of lack of the rule of law and justice created certain mentalities and perceptions on the side of both Armenians and Muslims. As Stephan Astourian says, unpunished and continuous crimes (land extortions, murder, forced labor, rape, illegal taxation...), increased partly due to Muslim immigration from the Balkans and Caucasia, against Armenians from 1850s onward made Armenians “fair game” in the eyes of neighboring communities. In

other words, these created a social setting in which violence against a target group was routinized and normalized.<sup>409</sup>

On the Armenian side this situation created a psychology of continuous victimhood and vulnerability. They saw themselves under a systematic attack from the state and its agents and collaborators in society. *Due to their collective memory shaped by past oppressions and massacres, they regarded every single assault as made not just against Armenian individuals but against Armenianness and their Christian identity.* Even after the constitution they could not completely get rid of the fear of being massacred. Leaving aside the actual massacres of Adana, one can observe through the Armenian press that they felt this risk, real or perceived, in also some other places. For example, in March 1912 around Karasu, Adapazarı, upon the rumor that Turks would not let Christians celebrate the Easter peacefully the Armenians of the regions got terrorized.<sup>410</sup> The survivor account from Marash mentioned at the beginning of this chapter relaying that Armenians were observing their Muslim/Turkish compatriots' mood, dispersing from mosque, to understand whether Armenians would be in safety or not is also a good example of their psychology. Therefore, they established a direct link of correlation between the actual implementation of democratic constitutional system and the treatment they faced from state and their compatriots. For example, they frequently said they could not believe the sincerity of the constitutional regime unless injustices against them had stopped and fixed.

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<sup>409</sup> Astourian, "Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization," 61.

<sup>410</sup> *Putanya*, March 17, 1912, No: 10, p. 375. In addition to this example one can add the fear of massacre Armenians had in Konia, Kayseri, Harput, Gürün, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, and Beirut during Adana events. These are mentioned in the introduction of this text.

In order to interpret the relations between Armenians and other groups in more detail let us remember Hewstone et al.'s argument that *where killings have erupted the prior contact lacks some very important characteristics such as equal status and cooperation but it existed just as superficial contact, a mere coexistence without meaningful relations across ethnic lines.*<sup>411</sup> There are strong indicators showing that the state of inter-communal relations during the second constitutional period quite suits this description. Here one of the key terms is “equal status”. When one examines the situation of Ottoman Armenians from this perspective, he would see that there were communal inequalities along different axes. In the first instance, beyond what was written in legal documents and articulated in formal speeches, political equality of Armenians (and other non-Muslims) with Muslims was an idea that was still very hard to be accepted by a large portion of Muslim people in the second constitutional period. Suny summarizes the background of this relation as such:

“Armenians and Turks coexisted in an unequal relationship, one of subordination and superordination, with the Muslims on top and the non-Muslims below. The sheer power and confidence of the ruling Muslims worked for centuries to maintain in the Armenians a pattern of personal and social behavior manifested in submissiveness, passivity, deference to authority, and the need to act in calculatedly devious and disguised ways.”<sup>412</sup>

Shortly, Muslims were largely not ready and eager to see Armenians as equal political actors who were correspondingly influential in decision making. This does not mean to say that Armenians were categorically excluded from formal decision

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<sup>411</sup> Hewstone et al., “Why Neighbors Kill: Prior Intergroup Contact and Killing of Ethnic Outgroup Neighbors,” 66.

<sup>412</sup> Ronald Grigor. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 101.

making committees or processes, which was not true basically for both local and national level; but their political and social equality and its embodiment in daily life was hard to accept ideologically *in the eyes of their Muslim compatriots*. On the other hand, Armenian opinion leaders regarded their community as more modern and “civilized” compared to their neighbors since they could get longer and better education, have more relations with “European civilization and culture” etc. Even, as mentioned above, some Armenians claimed that their social and cultural development as a community could be used as an engine force for the progress of the whole country as they could help to spread education in neighbor communities such as Kurds or act like mediators between Europe and Turks.

One can come across some articulations also by some Muslims justifying the view that Armenians were much better educated. This created admiration, worry and even fear. It was one of the reasons of why the Muslim statesmen and intellectuals were reluctant about the political equality of Christians. A letter sent by a man from the close circles of Ali Pasha to a French newspaper openly states that since Ottoman Christians were educated much better than the Muslims, equality would mean the end of Muslims.<sup>413</sup> Also after the Revolution of 1908 these feelings among Muslims were still living. For example, Ahmet Sherif, who traveled across Anatolia between 1909 and 1914 and published his observations in *Tanin*, compares the Armenian community school and Muslim public schools in Eskişehir and says that the Armenian school which was founded by the efforts and resources of the local Armenian community was more advanced and organized compared to the public

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<sup>413</sup> Taner Timur, “Uluslaşma Süreci İttihatçılık Ve Devrim,” in *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi*, ed. Sina. Akşin, Sarp. Balcı, and Barış Ünlü, *Yüzyüncü Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 44.

schools where Muslim children got education.<sup>414</sup> Indeed, he made this comparison between Christian and Muslim schools wherever he went. Similarly, upon visiting the Armenian school in Nallihan, Ankara, and witnessing the success of its students compared to the students at the Muslim public schools even in writing and reading Turkish he says

“It is my duty to congratulate my Armenian citizens who worked much and stood every sacrifice they can for the sake of education; however it is also my duty to remind Muslims, who are sleeping in inertia and looking at the state with an open mouth, to imitate their [Armenian] compatriots, to wake up from the sleep of negligence, remember their humanity.... You can be sure that if *we* do not work today and especially educate our children the future is not *ours*. Imitate Christian citizens in your initiatives who are more advanced than you in all aspects and live a more affluent life.”<sup>415</sup>

Upon seeing the situation in Tashucu, Mersin, he also says that even in this small place the difference between Christians and Muslims in terms of getting prepared for life was remarkable. The most beautiful and biggest buildings at the center belonged to the Christians who did not avoid making every sacrifice for the education of their children whereas the Muslims were like living deaths both physically and spiritually. They were indifferent to future as much as they can.<sup>416</sup> His words, after visiting the Armenian schools in Sivrihisar and seeing a similar difference, are clearer in the sense of reflecting his apprehension:

“I cannot understand anyway how the unity and equality would be established as long as the educational (*fikir ve düşünce terbiyesi*) gap among various elements of Turkey persists and widens day by day. In order to grasp this gap it is enough to see the schools belonging to different communities at the remotest parts of the country. Turks and Muslims are

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<sup>414</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanîn*, 56, 57.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 89. Italics are mine.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

insistent on ignorance as much as Christian citizens on working, especially preparing their children for the future. Here starts a social hazard that concerns those who are interested in the future of the country. For example, tomorrow the army will consist of all children of the fatherland; naturally, equality in duties will follow legal equality. I do not know whether at that time the fait accompli will awaken us?

Let us be sure that Artin and Yorgi will join to the army as having the primary education and some small experience whereas Mehmed will need three-five months to learn all these. This means just at the door of barracks there would be a difference of five months between Yorgi and Mehmed.

This difference is not peculiar to military life. In all missions there is a *danger*.”<sup>417</sup>

Here Ahmet Sherif clearly makes a separation between Muslims and non-Muslims including Armenians; and when he says “we” he refers to Muslims. Moreover, he evaluates the ‘asymmetric’ progress of Christians as a threat to social position of Muslims. At this point, it is very interesting to observe and compare two different evaluations about the relatively more developed social stance of Armenians (Christians). *On the one hand, some Armenians regarded their social progress as an opportunity to be used for the benefit of also other groups (Muslims); on the other hand, some Turks/Muslims, though they admired Armenians’ zeal for progress, saw this as a potential threat for Muslim communities since there would be a possibility of being socially marginalized by Armenians.* Although it is not easy to exactly detect the extent of this feeling among Muslims it can be surely said that it was spread enough to strain the inter-communal relations.

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 104, 105. Italics are mine. For similar comparative impressions Ahmet Sherif got in different localities of Anatolia see Ibid., 181, 186, 321. Although this was the general situation there were some places where there was no difference between Armenians and Muslims in terms of poverty and life style. Ahmet Sherif mentions some towns and villages of Erzurum province as such but as exceptions see 326, 327, 330.



In brief, one can detect the inequality between Armenians and Muslims along two parameters. On the political domain, although they had active political parties, Armenians were comparatively weak in the sense that their influence on decision making processes was marginal and they did not have the political power to direct and conclude any debate according to their aim, they always needed an ally. In elections, for example, as many contemporary Armenian commentators acknowledge,<sup>418</sup> in many regions Armenian political parties (or independent candidates) did not have the ability to make their candidates be elected without the assistance of Turkish parties even if there was a considerable amount of Armenian population in that region. In other words, they had to make an alliance with this or that Turkish party to send deputies to the parliament in many places. This was because of the electoral system as well as the fact that they were internally divided between different, even rival, political parties which exacerbated their dependency on Turkish parties. As a matter of fact, the journal *Putanya* criticizes the Armenian Civil Council of Izmit because of their decision to nominate an Armenian candidate in the 1912 elections, a certain Bulutian, who was supported by neither *Ittihad* nor *Itilaf*, which made the chance of being elected zero. “This step is viler than a simple ignorance of politics” says *Putanya* showing another example of aggressive language that Armenians from different groups used for each other.<sup>419</sup> Eventually, although one cannot see an insistent demand from Armenian circles for an electoral system whose determinative principle would be proportional representation along ethnic lines, they were anxious of not sending even a single deputy to the parliament from those regions where they had a sizeable population. For example in September 1909,

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<sup>418</sup> Z, “Parliamentary Elections”, *Putanya*, Feb. 18, 1912, No: 5, p. 556.

<sup>419</sup> Editorial, “Fault after Fault”, *Putanya*, March 10, 1912, No: 9, p. 568.

an article complaining of the ethnic composition of the parliament was published in *Haratch*. It says that although there were 7-8 million Turks in the whole empire almost half of the parliament was Turk (135 deputies) whereas other nations being equal to around 22 million had 140 deputies in total.<sup>420</sup> The province of Edirne was a striking example of this imbalance since none of the nine deputies of this province in 1908 was non-Muslim despite a large non-Muslim population.<sup>421</sup> When one examines the total number of Armenian deputies in the Ottoman parliament, there was also a remarkable imbalance. The total number of Armenian deputies, partisan or independent, was 11 which was virtually 4% of the deputies whereas the total ratio of the Armenian population in the whole country was estimated at between 8-10%.

This situation was one of the facts that made Armenians politically weak and dependent. *As a result of this political weakness they eventually could not do anything other than complaining or preparing reports, giving petitions to end the injustices they faced in daily life due to land usurpations and other exploitations.*

As for economic and social domain, because of many reasons (to count but few: earlier contact of European legacy of the Enlightenment, business relations with Europe, their global diasporic existence, more intense contact and interaction with missionaries which are well beyond both scope and capacity of this text), the Armenians, besides the Greeks and Jews, were relatively more advanced compared to their Muslim compatriots in the sense that they had a better, updated education, a more comprehensive knowledge in technological and commercial issues and other professional areas, a more vivid associational life; and accordingly their influence was felt more on production processes both in material and intellectual ground.

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<sup>420</sup> Yervant, "What did the parliament do? II", *Haratch*, Sept.1, 1909, No: 27, p. 1.

<sup>421</sup> Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011), 123.

As it is said Europe had an important influence on the direction and change of the social relations between the Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The increase in the trade with Europe beginning by the eighteenth century influenced the relations between communities and their positions vis-à-vis each other. The role of mediation played by non-Muslims brought about an increase in the economic disparity between Ottoman communities which was easily transformed into tension along ethnic and religious lines. Generally speaking, Muslim merchants were excluded from these economic relations since they could not perform this role of mediation due to their incapacity in European languages and connections. As Karen Barkey says this exclusion made them angry and turn to their Muslim identity more fervently. Moreover, the competition brought about by the European trade increased the feeling of insecurity both in Muslim and non-Muslim communities. This also became a factor that encouraged the closed organizations within the limits of their community. The intermediary position of native non-Muslims was not restricted with trade. Especially through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Europeans hired native non-Muslims in their transportation or construction projects in administrative middle rank positions where Muslims generally took the role of cheap labor.<sup>422</sup> The modern agricultural and industrial machines largely brought by the Armenians also caused uneasiness and hatred toward them among Muslim masses. These were some elements of the evil West imported by the Armenians in the eyes of Muslim peasants and artisans.<sup>423</sup> Suny summarizes this situation as such, “Armenian education, publishing and upward mobility in the urban economy were significantly

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<sup>422</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 279, 285.

<sup>423</sup> Astourian, “Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization,” 66.

more developed than that of Muslims. And as the Turks themselves strove to imitate the ways of the West, it seemed as if the Armenians were already half way there.”<sup>424</sup>

Additionally and relatedly, the Armenians, compared to their Muslim compatriots, were more articulate and assertive in expressing their problems and demanding solutions. Although they were not the only ones living under oppression, due to the level of political consciousness they reached and the intellectual “awakening” they had, they demanded their rights of humanity without any delay.<sup>425</sup> Their struggle made them more visible in social life. *This disproportionately high visibility in social and economic domains compared to their political and demographic weakness did increase enmity against them on side of their Muslim compatriots.* Already before, in the nineteenth century, as Astourian contends, the name Armenian became a signifier of all things evil for certain circles: liberalism, Western culture and imperialism.<sup>426</sup> These are the reasons of why some Muslims thought, when they saw Armenians on the street protesting, that “Armenians get spoiled” or desired to kill an Armenian “for the sake of example” (*ibret-i alem için*).

As a result, there was an asymmetry in the situation of Ottoman Armenians: politically weak but socially effective, which brought about a strong feeling of *relative deprivation* among them; and as the gap between their expectations and actual situation widened that exacerbated the feeling of relative deprivation. This pattern eventually became a death trap for them.

A simple graph might help to grasp the communal gap better; but before that two important notes about this analysis should be reminded. First, this is a

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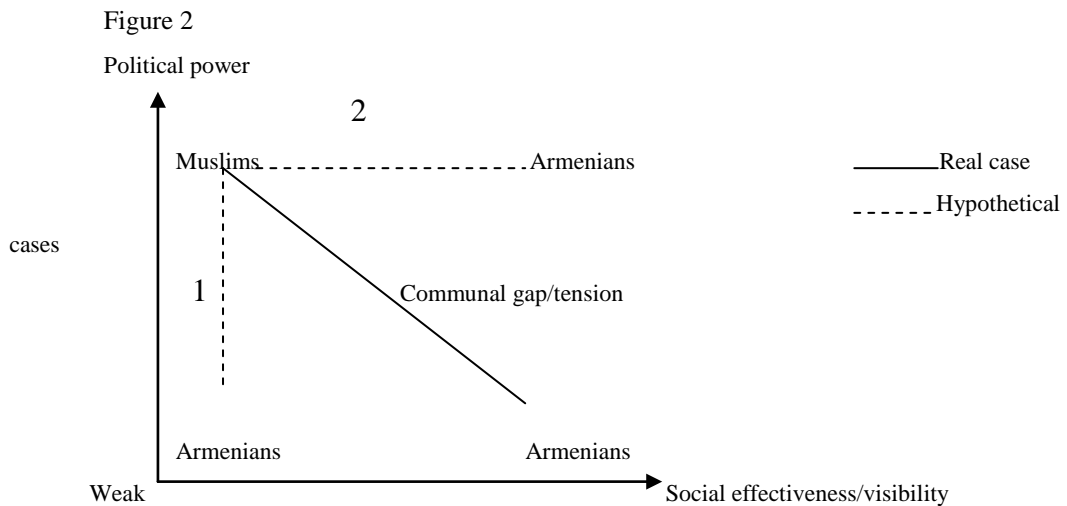
<sup>424</sup> Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 102.

<sup>425</sup> Ahmet Şerif., *Anadolu'da Tanîn*, 343.

<sup>426</sup> Astourian, “Genocidal Process: Reflections on the Armeno-Turkish Polarization,” 60.

comparison between communities as two collective entities. In this sense, surely it is a generalization meaning that there were many individual exceptions since every single Armenian was not socially and economically more advanced than every single Muslim individual or every single Armenian was not politically weaker than every single Muslim. However, this does not change the positions of two communities vis-à-vis each other. Secondly, in this analysis what is more important is the *perception*. For example, one may question the precept that Ottoman Armenians were socially more advanced; and this might be true or not. However, primary accounts referred above show that there was such a perception on the side of both Armenians and Muslims/Turks; and what is determinative in communal relations, in the final analysis, is the perception. Perception itself is reality.

If it is put as a simple comparative graph:



As the graphic shows, in an examination along these two axes (political power vs. social effectiveness) real situation brings about the maximum communal gap/tension. For example, if Armenians had been less active in social aspects (dotted line 1 in the graph) or politically more powerful (dotted line 2) the communal gap/tension would

have been less. This situation of double inequality at communal level, one can say, hardened the relations more compared to a situation of inequality along only one axis.

Michael Mann also points to the critical role played by inequality in ethnic conflicts and cleansings. “Indeed, murderous cleansing does not occur among rival ethnic groups who are separate but equal. Mere difference is not enough to generate much conflict. It is not Christians against Muslims that causes problems, but contexts in which Muslims feel oppressed by Christians (or vice versa)... For serious ethnic conflict to develop, one ethnic group must be seen as exploiting the other.”<sup>427</sup> Although the Armenian case largely justifies this detection the situation in the late Ottoman Empire was slightly more complicated since one of the groups, namely the Armenians, was being exploited by the Muslims/Turks whereas the latter perceived the former’s economic and social development as a threat for their own domination and well-being in the future. Indeed, both parties were afraid of each other.

After inequality, the second important factor in inter-communal relations, as Hewstone et al. state, is whether there is a meaningful cooperation across ethnic lines or it is just superficial contact and mere coexistence. The situation described and named as fraternity in protocol exactly corresponds to superficial coexistence that Hewstone et al. talks about. Sitting of individuals from different ethnic groups side by side in some local administrative bodies or in ceremonies and celebrations, though not completely unimportant, in social terms, meaning in terms of daily, concrete relations between people, is another example of superficial and restricted contact since it was restricted within time and space.

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<sup>427</sup> Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*, 5.

Then, what would have been example of “meaningful relation or contact”?

Gordon W. Allport, in his early work of 1954, points four factors that might contribute to the improving of intergroup relations: equal status (on which we already focused above), common goals, institutional support, and perception of similarity between groups.<sup>428</sup> So, meaningful inter-ethnic relations can be specified as persistent, institutional relation in which agents continuously share public space and have the chance of dialogue, mental and emotional communication. For example, in the late Ottoman context if the project of religiously and ethnically mixed schools could have been realized and expanded that could have been a base for meaningful relations according to criteria above. In fact, one may find suggestions or projects in the Armenian press of the second constitutional period that could have been the ground of meaningful cooperation. Garabed Soghigian, one of the professors of American Yeprad College in Harput, who foresees that “if the hands of the various races do not hold each other for business the hatred and chauvinistic prejudices among them will not vanish”,<sup>429</sup> proposes, for instance, to establish companies whose partners would be individuals from different ethnicities. Hence, people of different ethnic background would come together within an institution and for a common purpose, i.e. profit. “When the Armenians, the Turks, the Greeks, and the Bulgarians become united by the ties of profit, they will understand how important it is to assist rather than to kill one another, and this approach will lead to the expected harmony and peace among communities.”<sup>430</sup> Another proposition to increase the relations among ethnicities, again from one of the professors of Yeprad College, Hovhannes

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<sup>428</sup> Cited in Hewstone et al., “Why Neighbors Kill: Prior Intergroup Contact and Killing of Ethnic Outgroup Neighbors,” 66.

<sup>429</sup> Garabed Soghigian, *Yeprad*, Nov. 1, 1909, No: 1, 3.

<sup>430</sup> Garabed Soghigian, *Yeprad*, Nov. 15, 19010 No: 1, 96.

Boucikanian, was to widen the public space where those people could come together.

He emphasizes the importance of public space and life in comparison with Europe:

“...Public life and feelings are important in Europe... They are expressed in many European societies through various activities. Auditoriums, reading halls, museums, theaters, painting exhibitions, dancing halls, bars, playgrounds, concerts and shows are some indicators of a vivid public life. Through such a rich public life and intimate relations among people, the national spirit is extremely strong in Europe. Without this spirit, society is a mixture of separate parts, a crowd. It is this spirit that gives it a function, a solid existence.”<sup>431</sup>

Although each ethnic group had its own associational life it is not easy to find examples in which individuals from different groups had been socializing together and being engaged in dialogue as Boucikanian means. Just in one example in Diyarbekir something similar occurred. A correspondent reports in September 1909 that within the last one year Apostolic Armenians, Protestant and Catholic Armenians had founded their associations for educational and cultural purposes as well as Chaldeans and Assyrians. Three months before this, the society of Apostolic Armenians and local branch of *Ittihat* opened a coffee shop and reading hall together which aimed to increase the contact and relations between Turks and Armenians. But beyond that, all associations of the city, *Ittihat Cemiyeti*, *Askeri Kulubii*, Hnchak branch, Greek and Assyrian Catholics tuned it into an inter-communal place. Each gave three representatives and they formed a committee called Ottoman Brotherhood.<sup>432</sup> Although it might be a counter-factual and ahistorical statement one can say that if such examples had been increased and expanded more harmonious and peaceful inter-ethnic relations could have been established.

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<sup>431</sup> Hovhannes Boucikanian, *Yeprad*, March 15, 1910 No: 10, 170.

<sup>432</sup> Keghchuk, “A Flash of Hope”, *Haratch*, Sep. 18, 1909, No: 32, p. 3.



In conclusion, despite some restricted and eventually ineffective examples of cooperation the existence of Ottoman communities as late as second constitutional period was just coexistence without critical factors such as rule of law, reliable and fair public authority, and equality in status that would turn this coexistence into cooperation and peaceful political entity. Land disputes and absence of security of life and property were added to worsen the inter-ethnic relations.

CHAPTER V:  
IDENTITY, CITIZENSHIP, AND DEMOCRACY

One of the defining characteristics of an empire is its ‘multi-culturality’ as it contains many groups religiously, ethnically and linguistically diversified. Contrary to the ideology of nation-state, an empire does not seek homogeneity by erasing differences. Variety is the normality of an empire; its success is predicated on the provision of a political and social framework, and administrative mechanisms for the cohabitation of these differences. There are pre-modern and modern ways and tools to establish and maintain this framework or structure of cohabitation. One such dimension is the nature of the relation of people to the state and their compatriots, how they connect to the state and each other, and how they evaluate this power organization called state. In pre-modern times, empires did not have direct relations with their individual subjects. There were intermediaries organizing these relations. This is a way of ruling diversity. While every community is tied to the center, they do not directly touch each other.<sup>433</sup> During the transition from pre-modern to modern times the role of such intermediaries declined primarily because in the West by the eighteenth century the idea of individual independent from all his primordial identities and ties gained value and importance; in other words, the ideology of individualism raised and became popular. As a parallel development, in the West, countries become more democratic, and people started to feel attached and loyal not

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<sup>433</sup> Karen Barkey, “Changing Modalities of Empire: A Comparative Study of Ottoman and Habsburg Decline,” in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Joseph. Esherick, Hasan. Kayali, and Eric. Van Young (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 174.

to the personalities of monarchs or dynasties but to the relatively abstract notion of state because they thought that state was and should have been an entity stemming from and belonging to them rather than to a limited group of people called the nobility. In other words, the concept of popular sovereignty became the legitimate source of ruling, at least discursively.

Modern citizenship has been an important ideological instrument and administrative mechanism to create this feeling in people of attachment and belonging to a state. People established a direct relation with the state through citizenship. Moreover, modern states' capacity to affect and direct the lives of subject people was much more extensive in comparison to older versions of state. Understandably, people wanted to have a say on policies that influence their life; also they were willing to have a more accountable government. Here, modernization and democratization intermingled with each other.<sup>434</sup> Within this framework, citizenship also provides an ideological and practical base through which people can check the state and make politicians and bureaucrats accountable.

From the middle to the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire, like other eastern empires such as Russia, Austro-Hungary, had real difficulty one may even say failure, in transitioning from pre-modern to modern models of cohabitation; or, to put the same thing differently, from an indirect way of relation with subjects to direct relation of citizenship. Mahmud II and ensuing Tanzimat sultans and bureaucrats were cognizant of the fact that they should have created a new kind of relation between state and people in order to preserve the unity and

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<sup>434</sup> Ellen Comisso, "Empires as Prisoners of Nations Versus Empires as Political Opportunity Structures: An Exploration of the Role of Nationalism in Imperial Dissolutions in Europe," in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Joseph. Esherick, Hasan. Kayali, and Eric. Van Young (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 143.

might of the empire; and therefore, promoted an Ottoman citizenship and identity which would theoretically cover all groups regardless of religion or ethnicity. This was propagated as the ideology of Ottomanism. The Tanzimat Edict of 1839, the Reform Edict of 1856 and the Constitution of 1876 were all the documents reflecting this policy. After 1856, some official steps were taken to implement this policy in practice. "Restrictions on the dress of non-Muslims were removed, the foundations of secular legal and judicial systems that would apply to all subjects were laid, non-Muslims became regular members of governmental advisory councils, and a few secular schools accepting Muslims and non-Muslims on an equal basis were opened. The term *reaya*<sup>435</sup> itself was now officially forbidden in official language".<sup>436</sup> Yet, the internal autonomy of religious communities was also reaffirmed and reassured by the state at the same time. In the 1860s, as a confirmation of this latter measure, every community had an official document organizing its internal administration, and civil affairs. According to some, this was apparently contradictory with the ideal of Ottomanism based on secular equality.<sup>437</sup>

The reign of Abdulhamid II, when Islamic identity, discourse and ideology gained a remarkable ground to the detriment of non-Muslims, was a long parenthesis in the promotion of '*all inclusive*' Ottomanism since the Hamidian regime discursively and actually ignored the principal of equality, which had been an important theoretical and practical condition of citizenship including the Ottoman.

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<sup>435</sup> Until 19th century the term *reaya* had been used to denote all the people of the Empire regardless of religion and language. It had constituted a dichotomy rather with the stratum of *askeri*, the governing class. By the early 19th century the term started to be used in qualifying only the non-Muslims and gained a pejorative tone. Roderic H. Davison, "Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman Response," in *Nationalism in a Non-national State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. William W. Haddad and William. Ochsenwald (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 35, 36.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. However, non-Muslim communities did not tend to think so as explained below.

The 1908 Revolution was a declamatory resurrection of Ottomanist discourse and feelings. Although many people were talking, writing about and praising Ottomanism, which was supposed to denote the unity and harmony of all elements (*ittihad-ı anasır*), they did not understand or imagine the same thing. In other words, there were competing, even conflicting understandings and versions of Ottomanism. Michelle Campos articulates the ensuing formulation as follows:

"As the Ottoman imperial citizenship project incorporated elements of liberal, communitarian, republican, and ethnic models of citizenship, each "citizenship discourse" had distinct visions of the imperial collective, its relationship to other collectivities, (religion, ethnic group, local province), and the nature of citizenship rights and duties...the prewar Ottoman public by and large was preoccupied with envisioning, claiming, contesting, and implementing what it meant to be an imperial citizen".<sup>438</sup> Indeed, one of the reasons behind the failure of Ottomanism was these competing even conflicting mentalities, or in other words, "ultimately irreconcilable imperial citizenship discourses".<sup>439</sup>

This chapter aims to articulate the positions of Armenians embedded in such a variety of Ottomanist discourses after the 1908 Revolution, and it endeavors to do so especially in terms of what the Armenians understood from Ottomanism, how they imagined Ottoman identity and how they associated it with Armenian identity.

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<sup>438</sup> Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 245. It is very doubtful and open to research that the extent to which the producers and agents of different citizenship discourses were aware of the discrepancies between rival discourses, and more importantly whether they developed a dialogue to reconcile these differences.

## First Reactions

After the re-promulgation of the constitution the Ottoman Armenians, like other communities, participated in the celebrations of the new period. They themselves also organized celebrations, special events to understand and discuss the local and global history and meaning of constitutional regime. These gatherings lasted more than even one year after the Revolution. As a telling detail it should be added that Midhat Pasha was a name frequently honored in these events by the Armenians as the founding father of the constitution in the Ottoman Empire. Armenian Youth Association, which was closely connected to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-*Tashnaksutyun*), organized a soiree to honor the memory of Midhat Pasha in October 1909. During the night, Celal Bey, governor of Erzurum, was also present and gave a talk, various marches such as *Vatan*, *Osmanlılarız*, and *Marseilles* were sung with great cheer. The Erzurum deputy Vartkes Serengulian also gave a speech in Turkish, reminding the important role played by Krikor Odian in the creation of the constitution; he then analyzed the reasons of why the constitution failed at that time, almost 30 years ago. He counted lack of able intellectuals, immaturity of communities, and mistrust between them among some of the major reasons.<sup>440</sup>

All strata of Ottoman Armenian community regarded the Revolution as a beginning of a new period clearly demarcated from the ‘hellish’ Hamidian regime. One of the professors at the American college in Harput, Garabed Soghigian wrote: “We want to hope that the dark and sad days of tyranny have passed. Each of those years brought us horror...”<sup>441</sup> Different Armenian groups and intellectuals declared

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<sup>440</sup> *Haratch*, Oct. 13, 1909, No: 39, p. 4.

<sup>441</sup> *Yeprad*, Nov. 1, 1909, No: 1, p. 3.

that this change in the regime also changed their outlook on and position to the Ottoman state. After this change it was not possible for them to keep their attitude they showed against despotic regime as if nothing had happened. Therefore, they wanted to clarify their new position in the new regime. A declaration by Sivas branch of Hnchakian Party is representative of this change in attitude. They wrote it in Turkish and posted on the walls of the city to make their stance known by everyone, especially Muslims:

“Ottoman Compatriots,

After the announcement of the constitution in our dear fatherland, the Hnchakian Party has ended its revolutionary activities and become a political party. It has chosen the legal and peaceful parliamentary system to realize its aim which is the economic and moral rising of the country. It will express its complaints and demands through legal and parliamentary methods. The Hnchakian Party declares that it rejects any separatist aims against *constitutional* Turkey. It will stand shoulder to shoulder with Turkish freedom loving brothers against internal enemies of the constitution as well as the assaults of foreigners. It will fight under the Ottoman flag against all enemies that aim to disturb the peace of our country or shatter us into pieces. In the wars we will fight as one soul and the foreigners will see our solidarity and the Ottoman flag will be glorified under the sun.

Dear compatriots,

We are all the children of the Ottoman fatherland; the solidarity between us will turn our country into heaven... We, Turks and Armenians, will resist shoulder to shoulder against all encroachments coming from abroad. In order to *democratize the constitution* and make it perennial we will give hand in hand.

Hnchakian Party of Sivas”<sup>442</sup>

One point which Armenians, especially political parties like the Hnchaks above, wanted to clarify was their stance on separatism because they were aware that some were trying to defame the Armenian political movement through such ‘allegations’.

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<sup>442</sup> *Antranik*, Jan.31, 1909, No: 2, p. 3, 4. Italics are added.

One of the top officials of the ARF, Yervant Tamarian (Yeghishe Topcian), wrote a series of articles under the headline “What do the Armenians want?”, in the semi-official organ of the ARF’s Erzurum branch, *Haratch*, in July-August 1909. In these articles, putting Armenian existence and identity in Anatolia into a historical perspective, he explains what the Armenians had done during the Hamidian rule and what they expected from the new regime. He says that the Armenians had resisted many invasions throughout history; whenever armies from the west or east demolished their fatherland they rebuilt it; and survived till now. Understandably, they did not want to lose something that they had sacrificed much to preserve, namely their identity; they wanted to remain and live as Armenian. “*This was neither a crime nor contrary to the benefit of state.*”<sup>443</sup> In accordance with their ‘tradition’ of resistance, he comments, Armenians had struggled against the Hamidian regime to protect their existence. Instead however, the regime had propagated that the Armenians wanted their own kingdom and had armed themselves for this purpose. By doing so, the state had legitimized its bloody acts and provoked the Muslims against the Armenians. He continues that even if Armenians had wanted to secede, like Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians had done, no one could have blamed them since they were living a dishonorable and voiceless life during the despotic regime. Yes, there were revolutionary Armenian parties but their target had been the Hamidian rule, not the Ottoman fatherland, argues Tamarian. Although the big majority of Armenians did not want to secede the majority of state officials did not believe in this and continued to remain suspicious of their actions. The gist of what he says basically is that *Armenians did not want to get separated from the constitutional Turkey but wanted to preserve their national identity. Whenever they got armed it*

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<sup>443</sup> Yervant, “What do Armenians want? I”, *Haratch*, July 24, 1909, No: 16, p. 1



was for self-defense. Moreover, since the Kurds, Circassians, and Turks were armed it could have not been guilt for Armenians to be armed as well. In addition the Armenians were aware that living in a large country was politically and economically better than having a small sovereign one. Tamarain presents their willingness for military service as evidence proving that they were ready to serve the fatherland physically and morally more than anyone else. In summary, Tamarian stated that “(l)iving as Armenians under the Ottoman flag and seeing the light of real equality and freedom in all regions and nations of indivisible fatherland...That is what Armenians want”.<sup>444</sup> Considering that these lines were written after the 1909 Adana massacres even such a violent event, although it had generated great disappointment and doubt, did not extinguish hopes entirely.

Similar to *Haratch* in Erzurum, *Yeprad* in Harput that did not have any organic attachment to any political party still continued to believed that the Ottoman political system could be more free and democratic. But it also noted that this would not be easy and fast.

“First, and more than anything else, we expect the establishment of harmony and fraternity (between the communities) on a stable and strong basis. These are not impossible [to accomplish], but time is required. Let’s wait until the parliament constitutes its program, and the government works to realize the expected reforms. Let’s not be impatient. The damage caused over many years cannot be cured in one day.”<sup>445</sup>

“We are one and a half year old babies who are walking further day by day. Our hopes have been extinguished many times in the past. Now we are hopeful again. We hope that this country will recover from its illnesses and that the communities, in harmony, will demonstrate to foreigners that

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<sup>444</sup> Yervant, “What do Armenians want? II”, *Haratch* July 28, 1909, No: 17, p. 1; Yervant, “What do Armenians want? IV”, *Haratch*, Aug. 4, 1909, No: 19, p. 1.

<sup>445</sup> *Yeprad*, Jan. 1, 1910, No: 5, p. 71.

they are the master of their own country and have the right to remain so. We still hope that the government officials will gradually improve, and that the Turkish parties will not attempt to take the constitution back from our hands. On the contrary, we expect them to improve it. Our hope is still strong.”<sup>446</sup>

In sum, after the Revolution first reaction of the Armenians was joy and enthusiasm like other communities of the Empire. As the time went by and they saw that the pace of change was much slower than they expected a cautious optimism became dominant among the Armenians. Although Adana massacres of April 1909 was a great and horrible shock it did not terminate their hopes pinned on the Revolution. They continued to hope.

#### Rising Ottomanism: Elections and Wars

One can detect two contexts at which Ottomanist vision and discourse of Armenians became more salient and visible: elections and external threats or assaults on the Ottoman lands.

Elections. They regarded elections as a chance to make a comparison between past and present or between old and new politics. “On the eve of election” in 1912 Tokat Armenian newspaper *Iris* provided the following assessment:

“Despotism had tied us up in every sense. The constitution loosened those ropes; now we can think about what we should do to make all people live happy, how we should organize life so that each one, by being happy himself, can contribute to the happiness of others, what we should do to make *rights and duties* rule instead of force and despotism...The constitution gave us the right of being free citizens, and of [participating in an] election to show the will of citizenship...*leaving the nationalistic and sectarian trivial*

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<sup>446</sup> *Yeprad*, Jan. 15, 1910, No: 6, p. 103.

*calculations aside* we should concentrate our votes on those candidates who have won the sympathy of the public as honest Ottoman patriots, and who can unconditionally protect the just cause and acquisitions of society.”<sup>447</sup>

Hence, the elections were imagined as an event and moment where the Ottoman identity should have been crystalized above all other identities since the election results should have, at least in theory, worked for the common good for all not for a specific group. One correspondent from *Karahisar* expressed this thought during the 1912 elections as such: “The Armenians wish to elect such deputies, who will be capable of developing the Ottoman land, regardless of nationality. Undoubtedly, our Turkish and Greek brothers would also think so”.<sup>448</sup> The electors were called to vote by this consciousness of Ottomanness. However, people tended to be attracted to party politics and failed to agree on the best candidate regardless of his religion or ethnicity. When such ‘unqualified’ people become deputies, they do not do anything in the parliament other than saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ during voting. According to M. Varjabedian from Tokat, prospective deputies, in addition to being capable orators, had to have mastered not only the Ottoman language and but also one or two European languages. They should be knowledgeable about the European parliamentarian principles. Moreover, they had to prove, not by words but deeds, that they were real proponents of equality and justice. Here, the emphasis on deeds is important because the author states that people were tired of reading and hearing these principles; what they needed instead was to observe them being carried out in real life. The author addressing the parties by name, *Ittihad*, *Itilaf*, *Hnchak*, *Tashnak*, *Ramgavar*, states that they should have all recruited as candidates those who

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<sup>447</sup> Editorial, “On the eve of election”, *Iris*, Jan.15, 1912, No: 21, p. 1, 2. Italics are added.

<sup>448</sup> *Hoghtar*, March 31, 1912, No: 13, p. 50.

possessed these features. This was also to be the case for those ‘neutral’ candidates who did not belong to any party.<sup>449</sup>

External threats. The second context in which the Ottomanist attitude of the Armenians rose was external threats because such threats placed under risk the security and stability of Ottoman politics, and accordingly the reformation of the country in a safe, peaceful, and democratic manner. Therefore, the Armenians made calls to all communities of the Empire to cooperate for the protection of the borders since this would be the way to also protect the revolution and the constitution. The decades-long greed of European states for the Ottoman territory was a continuous complaint, as an Armenian author notes the following: “We [the Ottomans] do not want land from others, but hereafter we do not let them to rip off even an inch [from us either]”. He later cites each element of the Ottoman nation (namely the Armenians, Kurds, Albanians, Arabs, Greeks, and Turks) and explains how they would contribute to the Ottoman state and army through their specific national talents.<sup>450</sup>

Consistent with this outlook, Armenian opinion leaders were alert in reacting to external assaults as in the annexation of Crete by Greece. For instance, the Armenian notables of Sivas, along other ethnic groups, participated in a CUP organized demonstration on August 4, 1909, to protest Greece, and they also volunteered for a possible war against Greece. The Armenian priest Shavarsh Sahakian, notables Krikor Nalbandian, Vahan Moskofian delivered speeches at the rally; they also sent a telegram, signed also by the Armenian prelacy Torkom, to the

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<sup>449</sup> M. Varjabedian, “Who shall we elect?”, *Iris*, March 1, 1912, No: 24, p. 1-3.

<sup>450</sup> Aram Chakir, “The role of harmony”, *Haratch*, Jan.9, 1910, No: 2, p. 1.

Sublime Porte articulating their will and solidarity.<sup>451</sup> A similar reaction occurred when Italy assaulted Tripoli in September 1911. The commentators in the Anatolian Armenian press responded to this attack by again emphasizing the importance of harmony and cooperation of the Ottoman communities to be able to resist such offences. Although the Empire needed “a bright sky upon her head” in order to recover from the illnesses of *ancien* regime the problem of Tripoli “hit like a thunderbolt from the sky”. The country was expecting from her children to give hand in hand and work in harmony to “keep the Ottoman flag high” among the civilized nations of the world. Ignoring this call would be a crime equal to the crime committed by a child who spoils his mother’s milk.

“One cannot deny his mother in the face of pain and disaster. Although we received an external blow on our heart and honor [Italian assault on Tripoli] our first duty is to make reason our guide and see today, more than any other time, we should follow the holy idea of complete love and durable solidarity between different Ottoman races. Only this can make us claim and keep our existential energy. Mutual and sincere love and spirit of solidarity between Ottoman races can only save our country.”<sup>452</sup>

On October 18, 1911 a rally was organized by CUP and ARF the local branches in Izmit to protest the aggressiveness of Italy on Tripoli, in which more than 3000 people from all communities participated. The Armenian Apostolic cleric Arsen Ormanian, ARF representative, Zareh Gencian, the representative of Protestant Armenians Adalian, CUP representative Hilmi Efendi, and sub-governor Sirri Bey delivered speeches. While all censured Italy, Ormanian also emphasized the importance of harmony and solidarity of the Ottoman elements in the face of such

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<sup>451</sup> *Antranik*, Aug. 8, 1909, No: 32, p. 3.

<sup>452</sup> Haigag, “How is Ottoman victory secured?”, *Iris*, Oct. 1 and 15, 1911, No: 14-15, p. 8, 9.

intrusions.<sup>453</sup> The ARF representative Zareh Gencian said in the meeting, “Today great Ottoman fatherland faces an obvious disaster, a state that calls itself civilized initiated a wild plunder against us and now we can understand who the real friends of Ottoman land are...All European states declared themselves as the friend of constitutional Turkey but in the face of Italy’s banditry they all remain neutral, so that they protect our enemy...”. He continued that there were not only external enemies, but also internal despots, and reactionaries who were trying to exploit the weaknesses of the Ottoman society of which disunity was the most critical one. Ottoman country was composed of various nations; but its external and internal enemies wanted them disunited. They position the Christian against the Muslim, the Muslim against the Christian, the Turk against the Macedonian, the Greek against the Turk, the Turk against the Armenian, and the Armenian against the Turk and the Kurd. He ended his speech with this message:

“Compatriots, let’s recognize our handicaps and our enemies. Let’s respect each other’s freedom and love each other. When all the children of this country love each other and work hand in hand they become unbeatable and nobody can harm us.

ARF, fighting for the freedom and happiness of this honorable country, is ready to spill the blood of its heroes till the last drop for the salvation and development of this country like it did to protect the Persian constitution by the hand of Yeprem<sup>454</sup> and other altruistic *fedais*. Tashnaksutiun is the enemy of all the external and internal enemies of the Ottoman fatherland and extends its hand of friendship to its freedom and justice loving compatriots and calls together:

Long live the great Ottoman fatherland  
Long live genuine unity and fraternity  
Long live freedom fighters”<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> *Putanya*, Oct. 20, 1911, No: 22, p. 502.

<sup>454</sup> This was a *Tashnak* Armenian leader of the forces fighting for liberation in Iran.

<sup>455</sup> *Putanya*, Nov. 5, 1911, No: 25, p. 508.

Shortly, the Ottomanist discourse became more expanded and salient among the Armenians after the Revolution; and elections and aggressive actions of external enemies were two contexts at which people started to defend Ottoman identity more fervently because these moments were regarded as conjunctures when everybody should have ignored parochial interest and unite common interests. This way of thinking assumes that Ottomanness points to a common good for all above other particularistic identities.

### Equality and Justice

Despite all their enthusiasm and eagerness to internalize and promote Ottoman identity and the Ottomanist discourse, the Armenians were also very sensitive against those articulations and deeds they regarded as contradictory to *equality* and *justice*. They demonstrated this sensitivity even during wartime when, as mentioned above, their Ottomanist perspective became more articulated. For example, Izmit Armenians, even though they participated to the rally against Italian aggression, were upset when they heard that *cihad* had been proclaimed against Italy because they thought that this Islamic concept discriminated against and excluded Ottoman non-Muslims including the Armenians. Indeed, the Islamic discourse and practices of the state alienated the non-Muslims, and harmed the principal of equality which was to be one of the bases of Ottomanism.<sup>456</sup> If equality had been the basis of the relationship between the state and its citizens, the establishment of this relation through exclusive Islamic concepts would have been unacceptable because it privileged Islam and Muslims over others. In the face of such objections and

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<sup>456</sup> Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 71, 72.

uneasiness Sırrı Bey, the sub-governor of Izmit, tried to convince the Armenians gathered at the Protestant church of the city that *cihad* was indeed not a religious war, but a sacred war for fatherland, and the reason for declaring *cihad* was to get the support of other Muslim communities abroad. However, it seems that they were not persuaded or assuaged by this argumentation.<sup>457</sup> Similar to this case, when an *İtilaf* official member described the constituent peoples of the Empire in a metaphor where the Turks were the head, the Arabs the right hand, the Albanians left hand, the Greeks left leg, and the Armenians right leg, some Armenians opposed this description since it implies inequality because, they contended, there could not be equality between head and arms and legs as head orders others obey. This metaphor was unacceptable because it reflects a governing mentality in which a group subordinated others.<sup>458</sup> These examples manifest that there was a general intolerance among Armenians of the period against any act or discourse which they regarded as contrary to full political equality; and they immediately reacted to such deeds, articulations, and even metaphors.

The Armenians were so sensitive about equality and justice that even lawsuits between individuals from different ethno-religious groups as well as malfunctions in legal procedures were regarded as gauges of inequality and led to irritation and protest by them. One such case happened in Armash in 1910. The local intendant (*müdiir*) Ahmed Fahri ordered Armenian gendarmerie private Stepan to bring the 20 *okka*<sup>459</sup> corn from a nearby village *Inamiye* but Stepan somehow refused upon which Ahmed Fahri started to insult him heavily. Stepan went to the government office in

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<sup>457</sup> *Putanya*, Nov. 12, 1911, No: 26, p. 513.

<sup>458</sup> Tidak, "İtilaf's mentality", *Putanya*, March 10, 1912, No: 9, p. 569.

<sup>459</sup> Ottoman weight corresponding to approximately 24 kilograms.



Izmit to complain about Ahmed Fahri and filed a legal complaint to settle the dispute. However, when they went to the court for the second round at the appointed time they were told that the case was closed without any further explanation and investigation. The correspondent, Melidos Melidosian, evaluated this as a judgment that was unseen even during despotic times. According to him, this decision proved that the discrimination between *reaya* and Muslims had not been eliminated yet. Officials of the Young Turk regime behaved like the ones in the *ancien* regime. The local Armenian newspaper *Putanya* makes also a similar comment: “For the sake of Justice and Equality we demand the realization of this lawsuit; the malefactor whoever he is should be punished in an exemplary way so that others get a lesson”.<sup>460</sup>

The Armenians’ expectations of equality and justice from the new regime were so high that they evaluated every single event involving public figures from this perspective. The open letter that an Armenian merchant in Sivas, S. Tumacian wrote to the governor of Sivas, Nazım Pasha, typifies such a stand. Tumacian complains about Halid Bey, who was the general director of official documents (*evrak müdürü*) and the owner of Turkish newspaper *Vicdan*. Tumacian claims that Halid Bey, by his writings and articulations, provoked the Muslims against the Christians which was unacceptable and openly against the constitution. Therefore, he should be punished by the governor. Tumacian says that “There is no discrimination, nationalism, patronage among the constitutive communities of the Ottoman Empire any longer. All governmental officials have to treat Giragos and Nikol exactly the way they treat Mehmed. We today recognize only Ottoman society as the people of Turkey in its totality... We only recognize the principle of Ottomannes”.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> *Putanya*, Sept. 10, 1910, No: 24, p. 261.

<sup>461</sup> S. Tumacian, “Open Letter to the Governor Nazım Pasha”, *Antranik*, Oct.24, 1909, No: 43, p. 1.

Such Armenians regarded criminal-judicial cases as indicators of the position or status of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as a collectivity. At another instance, when four Turks reportedly raped an Armenian woman in Ortaköy, Izmit the correspondent relaying the event commented that “(t)ill now we thought that the Armenian women of Daron (Moush) and Van have been kidnapped. The women and girls of Adana have been raped; but today harsh reality has showed us that such things can happen even so close to the center”. After the description of the event he mentions the neglect of public officials; even they attempted to arrest those who caught one of the rapists. He ends the article by saying, “(w)e do not know what will happen at the end. This is not the first time that such things happen, similar events happened before. All of us are waiting the result of the investigation impatiently”.<sup>462</sup>

Similar uneasiness occurred when an Armenian youngster was beaten and robbed in the vicinity of Düzce. He recognized the perpetrator whom had been arrested first but released after a short while and “started to wander freely”. This situation stimulated some questions about the ‘new regime’: “Is this the justice that new-born free Turkey is proud of?” According to the correspondent, it was surprising to see that a minister of interior could not expand administrative and judicial reforms to places so close to the capital. “If such sad comedies happen under Istanbul’s nose who knows what could happen in more remote places?”<sup>463</sup> What we observe here in the discussion of such unlawful acts is that, the persistence of these events, just like before the Revolution, caused a deep distrust against the state and its will and capacity to realize justice; especially when the victim was an Armenian. It was the

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<sup>462</sup> Antsort, “Wild Rape”, *Putanya*, March 24, 1910, No: 9, p. 103, 104.

<sup>463</sup> Ashod, “How are criminals punished?”, *Putanya*, Dec. 1, 1910, No: 29, p. 320.

perception of the Armenians that state officials were not willing to see Armenians as equals, thereby protecting their rights as part and parcel of their public duties.

### Criticisms and a Feeling of False Dawn

As such attitudes and practices contrary to the ideals of the revolution continued to occur with increased frequency, the Armenians expressed their disappointment and hopelessness that the country and its people would change and become more democratic, egalitarian and libertarian.<sup>464</sup> As late as the second anniversary of the revolution Armenian authors were still talking about how important it was to actualize the fraternity of Ottomans; and repeating that the Turks and Armenians should have not engaged in a zero sum game, which would be bad for all parties. Instead, every element should have contributed to the rebirth of Turkey. However, the key was the attitude of the state. If it continued to discriminate against some different groups, they could have not lived together harmoniously.<sup>465</sup>

Again by 1910, articles criticizing the insufficient improvement in democracy, freedom and harmony (namely peaceful coexistence) became more prominent in the Armenian press. Some commentators claimed that during the initial days of the revolution, everyone, especially the Turkish orators, had continuously talked about harmony and fraternity; yet the point reached a couple of years after was unsatisfactory. By the end of 1911, one editorial, referring to the uprisings and fights in different parts of the country, clearly expressed disappointment: “Today Turkey is

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<sup>464</sup> Armenians were not alone in being disappointed. As a result of some incidents Jerusalem Jews expressed their disappointment one and a half year after the Revolution because of lack of equality and security. For details see Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 150, 151.

<sup>465</sup> H. Moskofian, “The birthday of the constitution”, *Antranik*, July 10, 1910, No: 73, p. 1.

in such a course that the recent events are denial of all the hopes that were born in the heart of the people of Turkey by the Ottoman constitution. We surely did not expect for such chaotic and unbearable times when the bright victory against the Hamidian despotism had been won”.<sup>466</sup> Indeed, it appeared that Turkish people were not ready to live with their Christian neighbors in harmony given bush telegraphs among Muslims such as that they cannot be equal and brothers with “infidels”; or freedom is in the advantage of “infidels” not for Muslims.<sup>467</sup> As Campos argues “Ottoman equality threatened some Ottoman Muslims' sense of history, divine will, and sacred revelation.”<sup>468</sup>

According to some Armenians, the 1909 Adana massacres had demonstrated the unwillingness of Muslims to live alongside non-Muslims as equals. The main reason of this unpreparedness was the inadequate effort of Turkish intellectuals in general and “the Ottoman Committee” (CUP) in particular to entrench the consciousness of equal citizenship and fraternity in Muslims’ mind. “The Ottoman Committee”, living away from the people, could not succeed in spreading the revolutionary consciousness among the commoners. It became the representative of the military rather than Turkish society.<sup>469</sup> One Armenian newspaper expressed this sentiment as follows:

“Harmony remained as a word for Turkish society; and even Turkish intellectuals are stammering, an idea to preach but never to realize...Unless real indicators of harmony are presented the Christians of the country will remain mistrustful and cautious which is the natural result of

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<sup>466</sup> Editorial, “About the course of events”, *Putanya*, Dec. 10, 1911, No: 29-30, p. 523.

<sup>467</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref, *Son Vakânüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi: II. Meşrutiyet Olayları, 1908-1909*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları sa. 133 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1996), 101.

<sup>468</sup> Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 88.

<sup>469</sup> This is an assessment about the CUP and later its heir Republican People’s Party that has been frequently repeated by both scholars and non-scholars till today.

the course of events. This became obvious after the Adana massacres when all Armenians hurried to help their doomed victim brothers regardless of their own economically poor conditions. Our Turkish compatriots did not show any honest and sincere condolence or move to collect donation. Neither their tears nor their money mixed with ours. On the contrary, in many places we heard from Turkish mouths some words like ‘If Adana has not sufficed, wait then, we will show you’.<sup>470</sup>

Many others, similarly arguing that the establishment of the Ottoman constitution could not turn into a revolution since it did not change the psychology and life of the Muslim masses, they did not feel a revolutionary shudder. Likewise, the Armenian community experienced only a superficial change that decreased in influence after the initial excitement. Their life was like what had been before the Revolution. The dominating classes of the previous order, after a short while of hesitation seeing that nothing had changed, started to dominate again.<sup>471</sup> The editorial of *Putanya* first complained in a disappointed manner that the promises and pompous statements about the harmony and solidarity of Ottoman communities turned into nothing and then it argued that the relations between the constitutive elements of the country were still cold and hypocritical now as ever. Same editorial reflects the contemporaneous psychology of the Armenians as such: “The Greek is always hesitant and prudent playing the role of absolute neutral. The Turk, by his nature, conceals his real psychology and intentions, of course working always for his benefit, behind bright words, polite poses, and promising smiles that only the East is capable of inventing. As for the Armenian, always hoping, always supporting harmony and sincere collaboration, even ready to extend his hand to the murderers of his brothers and fathers, kidnappers of his sisters, [but] he is always deceived and condemned to

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<sup>470</sup> Ashod H. Bazbazian, “Harmony”, *Putanya*, March 1, 1910, No: 7, p. 73, 74.

<sup>471</sup> Yergat, “Society”, *Putanya*, March 24, 1910, No: 9, p. 98.

disappointment and abandonment”. Although rallies kept taking place in different provinces to which all communities participated with their representatives making speeches, these did not reflect, according to this editorial, the real emotions of the people. The words of these orators were artificial and just gesture politics. Masses present at such meetings were organized from above and they were there only because of just a childish curiosity. “These meetings neither reflected the opinion of people nor corresponded to their life, needs and demands. Ultimately these meetings have been organized by Ittihad not by people”. Without paying attention to the real needs and demands of the working classes, the editorial continues, Ottoman unity could not be established. But Ittihad remembered the people only when it needed their votes in order to execute its projects. It had never organized a meeting with the purpose of bringing the social needs of the working people into attention because Ittihad was not the representative of society, not borne out of it. It is the genuine translator of the priorities of bourgeois classes on the one side, and the real representative of the Ottoman bureaucracy on the other. The editorial concluded as follows:

“As a conclusion, we say that the sincere and sustainable harmony and collaboration among various Ottoman nations are not possible unless a party focusing on the welfare of the working classes comes out of Turkish society and work with the representative bodies of the non-Muslim, non-Turkish communities. However, we unfortunately see that Turkish society still seems incapable of giving birth to such a popular and honest organization for a long time”.<sup>472</sup>

Skewed Ottoman Parliamentary Structure. The structure of the Ottoman parliament after the first election was also criticized as another indicator of the discrepancy

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<sup>472</sup> Editorial, “The collaboration of Ottoman nations”, *Putanya*, Nov. 26, 1911, No: 28, p. 519, 520.

between the people and the politicians. If such a parliament were to genuinely represent the people, its majority should have been largely composed by the deputies of the working classes including the peasantry. But, on the contrary, almost half of the actual parliament was constituted by landowners, referred to in one Armenian newspaper as the “exploiting class”. They were followed by *hocas* who were the second largest group in the parliament as the representatives of Muslim clergy and the advocates of reactionary narrow-mindedness. Such a parliament could not act for the benefit of the working people.<sup>473</sup> As a matter of fact, in 1908, 1912, 1914 the percentage of retired or active soldiers were 4.3, 6 and 4.1 respectively. Same percentages for *ulema*, landlords or notables (*eşraf*) in aggregate were 53.8, 40.3 and 42.3.<sup>474</sup> This shows that those groups that can be qualified as conservative in the sense of being against the fundamental changes in the government style constituted the remarkable portion of the parliament.

The parliament was not representative in terms of the communities either. Of the 30 million subjects comprising the population of the Ottoman Empire, only a quarter, namely 7-8 million subjects were of Turkish origin. Yet, almost half of the parliament (135) consisted of Turkish deputies; the non-Turkish subjects comprising three-quarters of the imperial population had slightly more than half (140) of the deputies in total. In the opinion of many Armenians this was negation of the principle of equality.<sup>475</sup> According to one foreign observer, Armenians were aware that they

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<sup>473</sup> Yervant, “What did the parliament do? II”, *Haratch*, Sept.1, 1909, No: 27, p. 1.

<sup>474</sup> Fevzi Demir, “Bir Siyaset Okulu Olarak Meclis-i Mebusan,” in *II. Meşrutiyet’i Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 247.

<sup>475</sup> Yervant, “What did the parliament do? III”, *Haratch*, Sept.4, 1909, No: 28, p. 1.

were not treated justly in 1908 elections but since they saw the constitution as their best chance they decided not to “grumble”.<sup>476</sup>

Another flaw of the parliament was the ambiguity in the distribution of deputies along parties. In the other parliaments around the world the distribution of deputies along party lines was an important sign to understand the characteristics, priorities, and attitude of that parliament since this distribution indicated the ideology and mentality of deputies. The Ottoman parliament had a very ambiguous picture in this sense since it was not possible to say which deputy belonged to which party exactly. Although the majority was Ittihadist it did not mean much since the party did not have an internal consistency. Deputies belonging to that party might have thought and voted differently in the parliament.<sup>477</sup> One of the important reasons of this situation is the fact that the CUP became an official legal political party not before 1913 but preferred to remain as an association apparently outside the composition of the parliament. Thus, there was ambiguity in the relationship between the Committee and its representatives in the parliament.

In sum, skewed and imbalanced structure and organization of the parliament was one of the reasons of failing in the implementation of equality, liberty, and fraternity.

In addition to these criticisms highlighting the insincere CUP stand and the skewed parliamentary structure, the Armenian community also tended to accuse the Turkish leading political circles and intellectuals as the cause of certain disappointments and deficiencies. Turkish politicians and bureaucrats took the greatest share from the critics as they credited and encouraged power politics instead

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<sup>476</sup> Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (New York, London: C. Scribner's sons; T. F. Unwin, 1909), 193.

<sup>477</sup> Yervant, “What did the parliament do? III”, *Haratch*, Sept.4, 1909, No: 28, p. 1.



of negotiation, parliamentarian and peaceful methods. The Armenians saw themselves as the naïve victim of this power politics since others who applied violent methods got what they wanted whereas, as one Armenian newspaper editorial argues, “in the Armenian provinces the same plunder is going on, the usual murders and abductions are put into effect systematically and maybe harsher than ever before”.<sup>478</sup> The examples of Albania and Arabia, where the Albanians and the Arabs employed armed methods to make the government accept their demands, demonstrated that effective policy was proving your ability and power. Whoever was powerful enough and proved it could take whatever he wanted. “As if the Ottoman government says to those who demand justice: ‘Show me your power, let me see whether you are worth of [justice]’ Arabia and Albania who are powerful enough succeeded in taking what they wanted after bloody fights, which had not been possible through peaceful methods”.<sup>479</sup> On the other hand, there was almost no change or betterment in Armenian provinces. The same editorial sums up the psychology of disappointment and hesitation well:

“The complaints from the Armenian provinces have not come to an end yet. They are more severe and worrisome today than ever. All the official representatives of the Armenian nation have made every application, every way has been detailed in the Armenian press in order to prevent the dangerous course in Armenia. It is true that none of these applications remained unanswered. Yes, promises, bright promises have been given; is that not enough, what do you want more? Ah, as if this is the foolish mentality of the country especially among the governing circles.

Here again, the Armenian deputies of the Ottoman parliament gave their proposal collectively to the government. Here again, Said Pasha made new promises. But don’t we, knowing those promises very well, have the right to doubt their value for a while? When these promises also turn to nothing the government of Said Pasha would say to us:

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<sup>478</sup> Editorial, “About the course of events”, *Putanya*, Dec. 10, 1911, No: 29-30, p. 523

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

‘Fools! Does anyone demand justice and rights like this? Didn’t you see Arabia, Havran, Albania? Don’t you see Macedonia? Follow them. Justice belongs to those who show the strength of their power.’

Yes, we see Arabia, Albania, Macedonia. But we do not seek our salvation in their example not because we do not know how to fight or are afraid of blood. Armenians have both [among their ranks] sheep-like victims and heroic martyrs but we want to seek our salvation in the Ottoman *constitution*. But a constitution that is not just only a word but a force that gives us every guarantee to protect both our physical existence and cultural life.

Are these guarantees given to us? Can Said Pasha’s promises provide it? This is the question”.<sup>480</sup>

If all is stated briefly, there was a general discontent among the Armenians because of continuing examples of injustice and inequality. Also, they diagnosed some lack of enthusiasm and sincerity on the side of the CUP to implement the reforms.

Furthermore, some structural problems of the political system such as the skewed and accordingly undemocratic composition of the parliament still continued to block the reforms. As a result of these, the Armenians complained that it was not yet possible to make improvements and solve problems through constitutional parliamentary methods but force was still the main instrument to take what one demands. They argued that Ottoman parliament could not become a real platform of productive political dialogue.

### Being Ottoman by Preserving Armenian Identity

Although the Armenians were willing to internalize Ottoman identity things get more complicated when one asks how they converged or associated Armenian identity,

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid.p. 524. Italics added.

being Armenian, with Ottoman identity; or how they positioned them vis-à-vis each other. Moreover, this was not only a matter of individual or group feeling and belonging but also of communal/collective organization within a state. What did the Armenian intellectuals of the time imagine and propose regarding the manner and structure through which Armenian identity would continue to exist in the Ottoman state and society? What was the general structure, both social and political, within which ‘Armenianness’ and ‘Ottomanness’ would coexist? How did they imagine Armenianness in Ottoman society and which role did they allocate to it?

First, one should state outright that in their mind, there was no contradiction between being an Armenian and an Ottoman. For them these were neither mutually exclusive nor negatively correlated categories. One did not have to sacrifice his Armenianness to be Ottoman; he could be both *simultaneously and equally*.

Before focusing on what they said on the convergence of Armenian and Ottoman identities it might be useful to consider *what they did not say*. Beginning in 1863, the year the first Armenian constitution came into being, the Ottoman Armenian community, like other non-Muslims, developed an internal organization based on legal documents, regulations and administrative bodies, even an assembly, all approved by the Ottoman state. Although during the Hamidian regime this administrative body had been suspended for a long time and although its efficiency, especially in the provinces, was very doubtful, Ottoman Armenian community had been governing its religious, educational, and civil affairs in a relative autonomy through this administrative structure, which was bureaucratically quite complicated with many special councils and committees. After the restoration of the Ottoman constitution, in line with the general rise in democratic and libertarian atmosphere within Ottoman society at large, the institutions and practices of this

internal/communal Armenian administration gained importance and became revitalized. As such, it should be noted that *no Armenian, be it cleric, partisan or from any other social stratum, claimed that the right to run communal affairs with a certain level of autonomy had to be renounced for the sake of being equal Ottoman citizens*. On the contrary, one can come across many contemporary articles reminding the Armenians of their responsibilities toward communal administration such as paying a certain amount of communal tax. Every Armenian household should have paid communal tax to meet the expenses of communal institutions such as schools and churches. Such a stable tax would have prevented budget deficits on the one hand and rendered ad hoc solutions and fees unnecessary on the other. Ottoman Armenian Constitution of 1863 had already provided the legal base for such a tax.<sup>481</sup>

Within this legal context, the Armenians generally imagined a two-dimensional set of responsibilities: one to the Ottoman state, the other to the Armenian community. Overall, they did not see communal autonomy in certain affairs contrary to equal citizenship. One author, in reference to Armenian history, states for instance that, “(t)he spirit of the nation comprises freedom through which the nation wishes to keep its independence in church affairs, to be free in education and trade and in improving all other works for which it has a natural aptitude”.<sup>482</sup>

For the Armenian intellectuals then, communal autonomy was a shield against assimilation. They were so worried about and sensitive to assimilation that whenever they faced an act which, they surmised, aimed at assimilation they became alert and objected immediately. Some of them even attributed the birth of the Armenian revolutionary parties to the assimilationist policies of the Ottoman state.

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<sup>481</sup> Ashod , “Communal Tax”, *Putanya*, Jan. 1, 1910, No: 1, p. 1, 2.

<sup>482</sup> Dirayr Vart, “The Spirit of the Nation”, *Putanya*, Apr. 7, 1910, No: 10, p. 110.

For instance, one of the top officials of the Hnchak Party, Sabahgulian, said in one of his public lectures in *Adapazarı* on November 28, 1910 that by the 1840s the Ottoman statesmen decided to assimilate all Muslim and non-Muslim elements into Turkishness. Hamid did not do anything more than implementing this previously decided policy. And he stated that the Armenian revolutionary movement emerged in reaction to this policy. He also claims that this assimilationist movement had not been solely executed by the state; but it had some Armenian collaborators, who had continued their job up to the present. Not only in Turkey but also in Europe those states that tried to pursue assimilationist policy had to abandon it whenever they faced a strong opposition. In the Ottoman case Armenian revolutionary movement had put forth such an opposition. Sabahgulian then explained that Armenians are a nation by definition since they have a language, habits, religion, and common feelings and ideas. “The Armenians have all the qualifications as a nation and they have the right to exist and the role to play in the new Ottoman regime; all efforts to assimilate them will be surely in vain”. However, he strongly opposes the argument that the Armenians comprise a nation of religion, thus its nationhood should not be equalized with Christianity. Especially those Armenians, who called themselves “neutral” in the sense that they were not members of any political party, supported this view wittingly or unwittingly. He then added:

“Now, those who qualify themselves as neutral claim that Armenians are a community of religion that should not care as much about political rights and obligations. They are terribly wrong. They think that some of the rights and obligations we have or will have in the future are superfluity, and tell us ‘You, Armenians, since you are a community of religion, renounce your political rights and obligations, you should be interested only in religion and the church, and leave the work of governing you to us’. In this case, should those Armenians be called neutral or are they supporting those who try to extort our rights as they try to demise the

deeds of revolutionaries, kill the national self-respect among our people... hit the Armenians by producing problems and divisions among the Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant Armenians? There is nothing such as the Gregorian Armenian, the Catholic Armenian, or the Protestant Armenian. If the Gregorians have their revolutionaries so do the Catholics and Protestants”.

He continues by saying that it was not Christianity that saved Armenians. It was not the religion that made the Armenians live but on the contrary Armenians made the religion live. Rather than praying for hours in churches now people should enter into the fight of life by being more prepared for it through education. “It is necessary to be the owner of our rights as a nation; and just as yesterday during the despotic regime we were the pioneers in the political emancipation of the Ottoman land, let us today work to become the intellectual and economic vanguards among the constituent elements of Turkey”.<sup>483</sup>

A similar rejection of assimilation came from the Erzurum branch of *Tashnak* Party in June 1909 when it was decided in the Ottoman parliament to increase homogenization in education and state control over all schools and make Turkish the compulsory language of education for all including the schools of the Christian communities. This was to be carried out in the name of equality, some Turkish newspapers argued, since this act would eliminate some of the privileges of the Christians such as deciding their own policy of education or curriculums of their schools. Some of the Turkish newspapers, Yervant Tamarian relays, even claimed that if Greek schools had not existed Greece would have not become independent. Tamarain, as a *Tashnak* official, did not accept this argument and instead claimed that it was not actually possible to apply this decision; moreover it would not serve to

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<sup>483</sup> *Putanya*, Dec. 1, 1910, No: 29, p. 319, 320.

the benefit of Ottoman unity. Every state that had tried to restrict the mother tongue of its people had failed. He gives the example of Germany that had tried to restrict Polish; or Russia that had attempted to ban Armenian. On the contrary, when Russia closed down the Armenian schools and confiscated their properties the Armenians, “even the bourgeoisie”, started to embrace their mother tongue more severely, and boycotted the public schools, and even fought at the cost of their lives. At the end, Russian state had to give the Armenians their schools and properties back. Tamarian also objected on linguistic grounds stating that Turkish was a very difficult language to master. Even the Turks could not adequately learn writing and reading in Turkish after studying it for years because the language contained a mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish colloquial; it would therefore be an impossible dream to make Turkish the language of education for all.

Tamarian then continued to question why it was regarded necessary to establish state control on schools. If the aim was to prevent the creation of a new Greece or Bulgaria, argues Tamarian, this would be an unfounded fear because what had directed the Christians to separate from the Empire and establish their own states had been the despotic nature of the regime and the circles supporting it, not the education in their mother tongues. In little Switzerland, the Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians continued to educate their children in their mother tongue and direct their schools according to their national spirit but they did not want to secede.

*“If in Turkey the constitutional classes (circles) are strengthened then the Christians will stick to the Ottoman fatherland more feverishly and defend its unity at the cost of their blood.”*

Only free communal education in mother tongue can stimulate the real love for the fatherland.

It is[an] inalienable [right] for each individual like air and water.

Turkish patriots should not follow the pernicious policies of despotic states against the Christian nations and their languages, but instead inspire freedom.

...

Let Turkish have its respectable place among the higher classes [in schools] as the official language.

Only in this way we can educate the generations that will work hand in hand in a brotherly manner without national and religious discrimination to defend the entire Ottoman fatherland".<sup>484</sup>

Erzurum deputy Vartkes Serengulian also objected to the CUP attempt to make Turkish mandatory both at the schools and public offices, saying that: "(w)e are Ottomans not Turks. The official language is Turkish. Therefore, an Armenian speaks Turkish in his official affairs. But he does not forget his Armenianness and the Armenian language. If we want to develop national sovereignty in the constitutional regime we should recognize the right of every [ethnic] element".<sup>485</sup>

Those Armenians who did not have any organic relationship with the *Tashnaks* or *Hnchaks* were also against assimilation. However, they were more sympathetic toward Christianity and the Armenian clergy, attributing to them a special role in the preservation of Armenian identity. According to this interpretation, the Armenian Church had always played an important role in the social life of the Armenian people through history. The Armenian Church had been the Noah's Ark for the Armenian people because they had found shelter and protection under its roof. This was true not only metaphorically, but also physically in that whenever the possibility of massacre emerged, they gathered in their church. But, the current question concerned what kind of a role it would play in Armenians' lives after the constitution. The answer was within Ottoman life. After the constitution, all

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<sup>484</sup> Yervant, "Turkish or Mother Tongue?", *Haratch*, June 19, 1909, No: 6, p. 1. Italics are added.

<sup>485</sup> Arsen Avagyan and Gaidz F Minassian, *Ermeniler Ve İttihat Ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), 55, 56.



nations/communities “under the Ottoman flag” had become equal, at least in principle if not in practice. All had a single name: Ottoman. For example, “We honestly say that we are Armenian Ottomans. But how do we preserve our Armenian Ottomannes?” asks Moskofian who was a regular contributor to the Armenian newspaper *Antranik* in Sivas. He employs a metaphor to explain: the Ottoman Empire was a garden with many different kind of trees. Although they utilize sun, water and other sources including the care of gardener, apple tree gives apple, pear gives pear. Just like that every nation of the Ottoman Empire would preserve its identity through its spirit; and the spirit of the Armenians was the Armenian Church. Although there were some other factors contributing to the preservation of Armenian identity the primary one was the church.

“Imagine that we do not have a catholicos, patriarch, prelates...where will the Armenian apply, where will he go, who will care our schools? That day we will cry... Thus, our church has again a big role. The spirit of mother Armenia resides there and watches the Armenian with open eyes day and night. Listen to her voice carefully which has been the sweetest consolation for us during our ordeals by always calling us to a great life. As a result, our church will protect us now and in the future as Armenians, Christians and Armenian Ottomans”.<sup>486</sup>

Hence, partisan and non-partisan Armenians agreed on the resistance against assimilation and protecting internal authority in cultural and civic affairs. Nevertheless, they differed in the role they allocated to religion and church in the organization of Armenian community. Both the Tashnaks and Hnchaks parties advocated a secular outlook, thereby giving religion and clergy secondary role in the social and political affairs of the community whereas non-partisan Armenians,

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<sup>486</sup> H. Moskofian, “Our church”, *Antranik*, April 24, 1910, No: 62, p. 1.

emphasizing the historical role of the church in Armenian life, suggested preserving its leading role in communal affairs and in relations with government.

### Decentralization

In addition to communal autonomy, administrative regional decentralization was, in the mind of many Armenian intellectuals, also important both in preventing assimilation and, maybe more than that, providing peaceful and democratic government. One of the key ideas, which, they say, were good not only for the Armenians but for all peoples, was to increase the participation of people into local and national decision making processes. After the Revolution but before the opening of the parliament the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutyun*) declared that, for instance, they recognized the integrity of the Empire since it had thereafter a constitutional liberal regime. However, decentralization should have been the administrative principle. Central government should have looked after general affairs like foreign relations, military, currency, customs, railroads, postal service while leaving local functions to the provinces.<sup>487</sup>

The Armenian press of Anatolia adopted a more or less same stance that supported decentralization. One can find comments in the provincial newspapers that encouraged people to take the initiative in the solution of their own problems instead of frequently applying to the central institutions such as Ottoman government, the parliament or the Armenian Patriarchate.<sup>488</sup> As a matter of fact, the Armenian prelacy of Sivas sent a circular to the Armenian town and villages of the province on

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<sup>487</sup> D.M. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology Under Ottoman Rule 1908-1914* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 17.

<sup>488</sup> Aror, *Haratch*, Jan. 9, 1910, No: 2, p. 2.

February 23, 1909 and reminded that they, in case of any problem, should have applied first to neighborhood councils or the prelacy rather than sending their petition directly to the patriarchate in Istanbul. They should have reported the problem with all details of place, date, and subjects to the prelacy; and these applications were to have the signature of local priest, the president and the secretary of neighborhood councils.<sup>489</sup>

In order to make the governance more participatory and democratic, some Armenian intellectuals suggested combining decentralization with plebiscites on certain issues. Since contemporary constitutional states were so populous, it was not often possible for the citizens to physically come together and decide the rules collectively; they therefore elected representatives and deputies. The people governed their affairs not directly, but through elected representatives. However, in “Turkey”, the election system was based on secondary electors; the people first elected the delegates who later elected the deputies of the parliament. Even if the delegates had good intentions, they might not often reflect the preferences of the people like a mirror. So, this system widened the gap between people and their representatives even more. Moreover, since the issues were finalized according to the majority rule in the parliament at the capital, the voice of minority in general and those in the provinces removed far away from the capital, was not usually listened or even heard.

An editorial comments on the importance of decentralization and political participation in democracy as such:

“In a country, like Turkey which contains different nations, different languages and religions, even different

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<sup>489</sup> *Antranik*, Feb. 28, 1909, No: 6, p. 4.

climates a law promulgated by the center might be useful for this or that province or nations, but harmful for others.

Just one example: according to the constitution the official language is Turkish. This law is good for the Turks because the official language is their mother tongue, but not for others since they cannot utilize the facilities of the official language.

...

Decentralized administration might in part meet these diverse needs.

...

But it is not enough. It is essential that every citizen should be able to participate directly in the solution of important issues [like declaring war, custom laws etc]...

Asking all citizens, this is the principle of plebiscite...Every province based on the largely decentralized administration should be able to decide vital issues in this manner.”

The author of these lines then gives Switzerland and the United States as examples of the countries in which this system did work properly. So, it was not surprising to see that in those countries there were different, even contradictory, laws about same issues in different cantons or provinces. These laws did not disturb each other; on the contrary, this *diversification produced maximum benefit for all*.<sup>490</sup>

In such discussions, Provincial Councils (*Meclis-i Umumi*) were defined as one of the important instruments, which could “cure the harms of centralization”,<sup>491</sup> of more decentralized and accordingly more democratic government. However, some modifications should have been made to make these councils more effective. It was good that these councils were consisted of representatives from each district (*kaza*) and periodically met to discuss and make decisions about various issues concerning that province. But, all decisions were doomed to remain on paper since these councils did not have any executive power to implement their decisions. Therefore,

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<sup>490</sup> Sano, “Society will be the master of its own house”, *Haratch*, Nov. 3, 1909, No: 45, p. 2, 3.

<sup>491</sup> Editorial, *Putanya*, Dec. 17, 1911, No: 31, p. 529.

according to the editorial in *Putanya*, executive authority of the provincial councils had to be increased. In the ongoing situation, let alone witnessing the concrete effects of council decisions, ordinary people were not even aware of who their representatives were in these councils, who elected them, when they met, what they talked and decided. “If we want these councils serve the purpose, first the election of their members should be based on democratic principles; secondly, their decisions should have an effect on local officials like the way in which the decisions of the Ottoman parliament influence the central government...A regular/formal connection between provincial general councils and the Ottoman parliament should be created so that local problems of each province can be thoroughly discussed in the parliament”.<sup>492</sup> Shortly, this proposition means to establish local assemblies elected by popular vote in each province and tie them to the center and each other in an administrative network. Indeed, this was a suggestion to replicate the communal administrative structure of the Ottoman Armenian community for the entire country.<sup>493</sup>

In the deliberations of decentralization what was emphasized was not only sharing political authority with local bodies; what was more critical was to implement democratic principles in the election and working of these local bodies. According to an interpretation, decentralization without democratization would mean nothing but feudalism as decentralization is the opposite of autocracy whereas feudal system means smaller but multiple autocracies. An autocrat is an autocrat whether in a large country or a village. All are against the social progress, and reason of national decline. Some commentators point to the Armenian history as the proof of this since

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> For the details of internal administrative system of the Ottoman Armenian community see Chapter II.

feudal lords exploited the Armenian people for their own benefit. Therefore, “decentralization is beneficial when it is democratic, when each community, each region has its own legislative and executive bodies all elected by popular vote. If each community is governed by autocracy independently from each other [and from the center], naturally it is not decentralization.”<sup>494</sup>

The appointment of local officials directly by the center was another problem of the centralist manner in government because these officials were not informed about the specific local habits, characteristics, and the needs of the multiethnic population where they were sent. They, except very few of them, did not bother to learn the language and culture of where they were serving because they were not responsible and accountable to the people of that locality but to the center that appointed them. Usually this brought about oppressive local governments. But if the population of the provinces directly had elected these officials they, being accountable to their constituency, would have been more sensitive to local needs and demands. Accordingly, regions would develop economically and culturally.<sup>495</sup>

Another argument to defend decentralization was that it might have been also a tool to solve the problem of political inequality in that such inequality would have been eliminated if more Christians had been employed in provincial governmental bodies. The ratio of Turks and non-Turks in public offices should have been

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<sup>494</sup> Kevork Mesrop, “Feudal System and Decentralization”, *Putanya*, April 20, 1911, No: 10, p. 404. For a very useful work that discusses, in the English context, the influence of different local conditions within the same country on the development of citizenship rights see Margaret R. Somers, “Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere: Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy,” *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 5 (October 1, 1993): 587–620. Sommers shows that in seventeenth and eighteenth century England in counties where arable lands were large and accordingly landed gentry was dominant in public sphere and in distribution justice, citizenship rights developed less and more lately compared to those counties where pastoral and putting-out economy prevailed and in the absence of strong gentry people had participated in local decision making more intensively.

<sup>495</sup> Libarid, “Talk to Action”, *Haratch*, Nov. 6, 1909, No: 46, p. 1.

calculated according to their demographic proportions of each locality. A commentator in the Erzurum newspaper *Haratch* claims that contrary to general view, conscious Turks would not oppose this because filling public offices had turned into a punishment or burden for them which was also the reason of economic inequality, namely relative economic backwardness of the Muslim people. Since the Muslim/Turks had been heavily busy with administration they lagged behind in other areas of work such as trade, architecture or agriculture. Sharing public responsibilities with the Christians equally would give a chance to the Turks to return to this kind of activities and so that become richer.<sup>496</sup>

Indeed, the Armenians were not the sole community that thought the country would be better off if decentralization was adopted; different circles voiced such demands. For example, some Arabs, following the example of Albanians, demanded decentralization and regional autonomy in cultural and administrative affairs. According to a certain Nejuib Nassar, the editor of the Haifa based newspaper *The Carmel*, although the Turkish element was the pillar of the Empire the other groups had a complete freedom to live out their national customs. Similarly, in 1913 former deputy of Hama, al-Zahrawi, expressed some thoughts supporting Armenian demands for decentralization and said that Arabs and Armenians had similar situation in this sense. Almost at the same time Arab Decentralization Party based in Cairo also made a call to Arab nation supporting the decentralization.<sup>497</sup> Briefly speaking, as Albert Hourani states, “[M]ost non-Muslims and many non-Turkish Muslims, meant by liberty and equality liberty for the community and equality between communities, and saw their own interest not in strengthening the power and

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<sup>496</sup> L. Pasbanian, “Our Neighbors: Turks and Progress”, *Haratch*, July 10, 1909, No: 12, p. 3.

<sup>497</sup> Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 236, 240, 241.

increasing the intervention of the central government, but in maintaining the rights of the communities and strengthening the administrative autonomy of the provinces”.<sup>498</sup> There were also some contemporaneous Muslim intellectuals who thought decentralization would be beneficial for the country. Prince Sabahaddin is the most known Muslim intellectual who supported decentralization and systemized it. According to him, two main defining principles of decentralization were extension of the authority of local officials (*tevsi-i mezuniyet*) and differentiation of duties between the center and province (*tefrik-i vezaiif*). Additionally, he proposed the formation of local assemblies (like the Armenian commentator mentioned above), and expending and inspection of the taxes locally.<sup>499</sup> However, he was not the only Muslim intellectual who had positive thoughts about decentralization. For example, Huseyin Kazim Kadri, who was a bureaucrat risen as high as to the governorship of Halep in 1910-1911, contended that if the CUP could promulgate the law of provincial administration and so that provide a chance of life and identity to those regions that are not populated by Turkish race, undoubtedly many cruelties, ambitions, and discords would have been prevented.<sup>500</sup> Many decades after Kadri, Çağlar Keyder, as a scholar studying the reasons behind the termination of the Ottoman Empire, agrees with him as he says "...a constitution providing universal and equal citizenship combined with ethnic and territorial autonomy might just have

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<sup>498</sup> Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 281; cited in Çağlar Keyder, "The Ottoman Empire," in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Mark Von Hagen and Karen Barkey (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997), 37.

<sup>499</sup> C. Reyhan, *Osmanlı'da İki Tarz-ı İdare: Merkeziyetçilik-Adem-i Merkeziyetçilik* (Ankara İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2007), 36, 153.

<sup>500</sup> Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *II. Meşrutiyetin Perde Arkası ve Makeodonya, Arnavutluk, Ermenistan ile Suriye'nin Elden Çıkışı: Türkiye'nin Çöküşü*, 1. baskı, Hikmet Neşriyat ; Belgesel Eserler Dizisi 24. 2 (İstanbul: Hikmet Neşriyat, 1992), 61.



saved the empire and avoided the excesses of nationalism and of nation-state."<sup>501</sup>

Nevertheless, the CUP, as the governing party, made its choice for the opposite policy, namely for centralization. Although the CUP's main aim was administrative centralization it had to make some concessions depending on the context. For example, in the Arab provinces a certain level of autonomy was given to local power centers. On the other hand, for Anatolia that was seen as the original Turkish land centralization policy was applied strictly.<sup>502</sup>

### Difference with the CUP

All these discussions referred above indicate that there was major differences between how the Armenians understood Ottomanism and how Ittihadist people did. The CUP brochures argued in 1910 that religious and sectarian differences were not impediments to being one nation because these were otherworldly issues. In the affairs of this world interests had priority; and the separation of Muslim and Christian elements was contrary to the interests of both since if they stand alone they would become easy prays for big states as some examples like Tunisia, Egypt, Crimea proved.<sup>503</sup> On the other hand, however, they did not accept or understand that it was possible to pursue and internalize Ottoman citizenship without sacrificing communal identities and autonomies which, in the thinking of the CUP, were barriers for equality. After the 1908 Revolution the CUP decision makers expected that for the sake of Ottoman identity and Ottomanism every ethnic or religious group in the

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<sup>501</sup> Keyder, "The Ottoman Empire," 30.

<sup>502</sup> Hasan. Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 130–140.

<sup>503</sup> Aytül Tamer, "İttihat ve Terakki Kendini Anlatıyor: Cemiyetin Propaganda Broşürleri," in *İkinci Meşrutiyet Devrinde Basın Ve Siyaset*, ed. Hakan Aydın (Konya: Palet Yayınları, 2010), 186.

empire would abandon even forget their communal identities, or at least restrict these to within the private domain. So, in the eyes of the CUP leaders, every action, or organization presenting, expressing ethnic-religious identities was taking a stand against Ottomanism. Ubeydullah Hoca, the Ittihadist deputy of *Aydın*, echoed this in a sermon he gave at a mosque in *Adapazarı* when he claimed that there could not be a complete equality in Turkey as long as non-Muslims had their patriarchates and communal 'privileges'. Non-partisan Armenian newspaper *Putanya*, which relayed this speech, claimed that this view was not true and moreover, such speeches were dangerous because they exacerbated doubt and hate among different elements of the Empire against each other.<sup>504</sup> Armenian newspaper *Azadamard*, a *Tashnak* organ, also said on June 25, 1909 that all Armenian parties agreed that "(T)he rights that made Christian peoples survive in a Muslim country, even though they were seen as privileges before the constitution, should not be named so any longer but natural rights of those peoples constituting the Ottoman nation".<sup>505</sup>

Ubeydullah Hoca was not alone in opposing communal privileges or rights. Cavid Bey, a member of the cabinet and the highest clique of the CUP, reportedly said that "it was evident that a sense of Ottomanism had not yet replaced that of communal identity among the inhabitants of the empire".<sup>506</sup> The CUP circles were after ideological and cultural sameness as the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Hakkı Pasha articulated in the Ottoman parliament: "Citizens should be of the same opinion on the matters connected to the life of the state. Namely, they should interpret and view the state's future in the same manner and they should possess the same sentiment. This is

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<sup>504</sup> *Putanya*, Feb. 11, 1912, No: 4, p. 554.

<sup>505</sup> Cited in Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler Ve İttihat Ve Terakki*, 55.

<sup>506</sup> A. L. Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923*, Turning Points (London ; New York: Longman, 1998), 60, 61.

absolutely the objective that the Government and *Kanun-i Esasi* (constitution) are looking for. The homogeneity of education and culture (*terbiye*) is desired”.<sup>507</sup> Moreover, despite all their articulations about fraternity, intellectuals from the ranks of the CUP did continue to propagate a hierarchy between ethno-religious groups promoting the idea of “dominant nation” (*millet-i hakime*). As Şükrü Hanioglu says<sup>508</sup> even before the Balkan Wars, when the motivation for Ottomanism was generally high, the prominent Ittihadist leaders want to keep the dominant nation status of Turks. For example, Hüseyin Cahit wrote an article with the headline "*Millet-i Hakime*" in *Tanin*, which worked like the official organ of the CUP on November 7, 1908. He explained in that article why the Turks were the dominant nation in the Empire and why they should have remained so.<sup>509</sup>

Also in the fourth congress of the CUP, in September 1911, the view that Ottomanization could be realized only through the assimilation of different ethnic groups into Turkishness dominated. The first step of assimilation was to make Turkish dominant in every sphere. The Ittihadists did not see any major difference between Turkishness and being Ottoman.<sup>510</sup> The following words by Ziya Gökalp, the prominent CUP ideologue, put it very clearly: "In fact, this policy of Ottomanization was nothing but a hidden vehicle for Turkification. If what one meant by Ottoman was the state, then every Ottoman subject was already a member

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<sup>507</sup> MMZC, [The Registers of the Ottoman Grand Assembly] Devre: I Cilt: I İçtima: 13, 25/11/1326-25/11/1910, p . 467-Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Cerideleri Ankara: TBMM Basımevi. Quoted in Erol Ülker, “Contextualising ‘Turkification’: Nation-building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908–18,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 2005): 619.

<sup>508</sup> M.Ş. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution* (New York Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 299.

<sup>509</sup> Taner Timur, “Uluslaşma Süreci İttihatçılık Ve Devrim,” in *100. Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi*, ed. Sina. Akşin, Sarp. Balci, and Barış Ünlü, *Yüzüncü Yılında Jön Türk Devrimi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 55.

<sup>510</sup> Avagyan and Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat Ve Terakki*, 90.

of this state. If the aim was to create a new nation whose language was Ottoman then since Ottoman was nothing but Turkish this new nation would be a Turkish nation under a different name".<sup>511</sup>

A first-hand foreign observer also noted how Young Turks and Christian communities perceived Ottomanism differently. G. F. Abbott, who traveled the Empire right after the Revolution, argued that all ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire were willing for its transformation into a modern state. All were patriots; however, their patriotism was different from Young Turk patriotism. Although they did not want to see the partition of the Empire they wished to see it as *an aggregate of self-governing communities*. It should be an Empire that, while protecting them against external enemies and each other, should have provided the opportunities to develop their communal existence.<sup>512</sup>

In sum, although Ittihadists and the Armenian circles, partisan and non-partisan alike, agreed on the principal of Ottomanism, what they understood from it was nevertheless quite different. For most of the Armenians, Ottomanism meant a kind of decentralized federal system in which Ottoman citizenship brought about some obligations to public authority and institutions in the exchange of some inalienable rights guaranteed by the constitution. This decentralization had two levels parallel to each other, communal and regional. The communities, indeed defined earlier by the *millet* system and especially in accordance with the regulations of the 1860s, would conserve their autonomy in communal affairs. Yet the major difference would be now the *equality of communities* that, though it had always been promised, but had never established. Administrative decentralization through local

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<sup>511</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>512</sup> G. F. Abbott, *Turkey in Transition* (s.l.: General Books, 2010), 40.

representative and executive bodies with members from all local communities would also contribute to the creation of a more democratic system. On the other hand, for the CUP Ottomanism meant to change communal *millet* system into a rational-centralized state organization in which Turkishness would be dominant. In the mind of Muslim Turkish intellectuals in general and the CUP leaders in particular, aside from a few notable exceptions, Ottomanism had never been fully separated from Islam and Turkishness

#### What kind of Coexistence?

In order to define the post 1908 Revolution stand of the Ottoman Armenians more clearly within a larger framework, it is analytically useful to employ Ellen Comisso's categorization. She examines possible attitudes of national groups in an empire under five categories. The first category is *insurrectionaries/nationalists*. These are people that can be satisfied with no less than a sovereign state belonging to their own. The second category is *pragmatists/accommodationists*. This was a position that rejects the sovereign state option because of impossibility or high cost but still have demands such as a voice in local and imperial affairs, schools in their mother tongue, access to positions in the civil service, subsidies for local cultural institutions, and maybe some level of local autonomy. As Comisso states "(i)n effect, this was a position that sought to maximize the benefits of empire, not to leave it". Of course, one needs to add that there might not be a consensus among the members of that national group about what they should demand exactly. Thirdly, some prefer *collaboration/assimilation* since sometimes the option of assimilation might be more advantageous and comfortable and often opening the way of upward mobility. So, it

might become a reasonable way. "Generally, scholarship on the national question in Eastern Europe ignores this strategy or minimizes it as a kind of treason, but it is unclear why changing one's "national identity" or acting in a way that made it irrelevant was any less important than the (socially and politically marginal) demands for sovereign statehood". The fourth attitude is *parochialism* in the sense that especially large masses of peasantry are not interested in "national projects" but their limited locality. In other words, they are more worried about local parameters such as tax, harvest, the attitude or mood of their lord. In the Ottoman case, the most important problem parochialism faced was the lack of law and order, and security especially in the rural areas of Anatolian provinces. Last category comprises the *anationals* whose motivation is something other than national identity such as class, confession, or occupation. The most important example is Social Democratic parties. By Comisso's words, "(t)hese parties were not nationally 'neutral' insofar as nationalities living in urban and industrial areas were more heavily represented in them, but their programs were invariably class not nation based".<sup>513</sup> However, these categories are not mutually exclusive; more or less all these currents might be simultaneously present in a national group. Which one dominates depends on many factors such as the fervor of the national movement, response from imperial authorities, and interests of political leaders.<sup>514</sup>

When the Ottoman Armenians are categorized after the 1908 Revolution along these categories, one can argue that the numbers of both the insurrectionaries

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<sup>513</sup> Comisso, "Empires as Prisoners of Nations versus Empires as Political Opportunity Structures: An Exploration of the Role of Nationalism in Imperial Dissolutions in Europe," 144–149.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 152. Comisso argues that "(f)rom this perspective, it is perhaps worth considering why "accommodation" may have been so popular in Austria-Hungary. The answer appears to be that the monarch was quite happy to listen to, deal with, and even occasionally satisfy the demands voiced by "national" groups, especially in light of the growing strength of mass organizations based on non-national principles".

and the assimilationists were quite small. As for parochialism, there is a paradox: since they were parochial it is not easy to “hear their voice” in history, in the written documents we use to understand the period. Therefore, it is not easy either to estimate the magnitude of parochialism among the contemporaneous Ottoman Armenians of the time. However, since the majority of them were peasants, short term concerns of survival must have been vital for them over the ‘macro’ projects of nationalism or citizenship. As a matter of fact, the news about drought, the price of grain products, epidemics affecting livestock, and finally land disputes and banditry, all of which were serious challenges to survival, was allocated a large space in Anatolian Armenian newspapers regardless of region or city.

Although, understandably, it is not possible to give any estimate, first-hand articulations show that pragmatist/accommodationists constituted the largest proportion of the Ottoman Armenian society after the Revolution. Yet, analyzing this category in depth reveals a subgroup, especially those circles from *Tashnak* and *Hnchak* parties, who combined the accommodationist perspective with the ‘anational’ one as they frequently brought up the problems of the working classes and the peasantry regardless of ethnicity, the misery in which they lived and suggested remedies. “Primitive” methods in agriculture and subsequent unproductivity are crucial problems frequently handled in these journals. When they suggest solutions they do not refer to exclusively Armenian peasantry. For example, one author stated that it was natural for those who suffered from the same problems, felt same needs and shared the same destiny to engage in collective action to find a solution, a way out of their problems. So he recommended that working people who belonged to different communities but shared same destiny because of their class should form various societies, agricultural clubs of interested in local agricultural

activities and problems. The primary aim of such societies should be to make their farmer members think about how they can improve their work. He especially stated that “(i)f our farmers do not defend their rights, think about and work on their circumstances collectively, they do not have the right to expect that others worry about them, and allocating their time work for them zealously”. Since he defined his audience as “Ottoman farmers,” it is obvious that he addressed not only Armenian farmers, but all participating in the agricultural sector.<sup>515</sup>

Armenian accommodationists do not anyway ignore the concept nation, defined here as a cultural group within an empire. On the contrary, they might have strong feelings of belonging to a particular religious-cultural group and identify themselves with that group. In other words, they have a certain “national consciousness”. Furthermore, these feelings and consciousness might increase the gap between different ethno-religious groups while facilitating cooperation within the same group.<sup>516</sup> However, the existence of such national consciousness does not mean that the demands based on it would always be maximalist, i.e. a sovereign separate state. As Comisso says “the forms of such collective actions and the demands it made were a function of the political opportunity structure of the empire in which it arose... where empires were functioning, the most common demands was simply for the chance to participate in the institutions of the empire”. This political opportunity structure was largely determined by the capacity of an empire to provide law and order and security of life and property. In a "functioning empire" the opportunities increased and the people demonstrated more willingness to participate in the institutions and political mechanisms. Therefore, it is also critical whether an

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<sup>515</sup> Antranik Bodurian, “The Conditions of Agriculture”, *Putanya*, June 10, 1910, No: 17, p. 198.

<sup>516</sup> However, conflict as much as cooperation defines the nature of relations among different groups of Ottoman Armenians. See Chapter III



empire can create the institutions in which people can participate.<sup>517</sup> The Ottoman Armenians after the 1908 Revolution were typical in this sense. Rather than completely rejecting the Ottoman Empire, they were trying to maximize what the Empire could provide them *as Armenians* in terms of liberty and material gains. Here they raised the important issues of the application of the constitution, equality between communities as well as individuals, justice, and participation in decision making.

### What kind of Citizenship?

In order to put Ottoman Armenians' understanding of citizenship into perspective, it is useful at this juncture to also briefly discuss the development of the concept of citizenship.

Modern citizenship in the West largely emerged as a category whose members were imagined as autonomous and atomistic individuals. In other words, in the liberal thought citizenship has been imagined as a status that people have in their individual existence, without any relation with primordial characteristics. On the contrary, one of the claims of citizenship was to rescue single individuals from the domination of not only arbitrary political authority, but also of the church, family, ethnic group "or any other force that seeks to deny us recognition as an autonomous individual, capable of self-governance".<sup>518</sup> Accordingly, rights and duties of citizenship were defined as belonging to individual which as an idea precedes polity in this kind of thinking. Every individual would possess the same rights and

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<sup>517</sup> Comisso, "Empires as Prisoners of Nations versus Empires as Political Opportunity Structures: An Exploration of the Role of Nationalism in Imperial Dissolutions in Europe," 141, 142.

<sup>518</sup> Keith. Faulks, *Citizenship* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.

obligations vis-à-vis the state regardless of his religion, region or ethnicity. This, at least, was the ideal imagination of citizenship as a Western product. In this approach, citizenship and group identities based on religion, ethnicity, or language are regarded as being conflictual because citizenship is a universal category whereas group identities are particular.<sup>519</sup> As a matter of fact, in the Orientalist mentality of the West, individuals in the East are not accepted as political entities since they could not keep themselves free from tribal, kinship, and other primordial ties and loyalties whereas individuals in the West have been engaged in political relations with the state as individual entities which have not existed in the East. In other words, the East could create citizens only by imitating the West and be partially successful. In the Orientalist thought Western type of citizenship has been a superior way of being political. The history of citizenship has been so narrated that it is presented as an exclusively European product.<sup>520</sup>

The second trend in the development of Western citizenship, in a certain contradiction with the first, was the domination of the process by nationalism and the nation state. This was contradictory with the first trend because it meant closure and exclusion on certain biological, cultural or linguistic criteria while the promise of the former was to open citizenship for everyone. In other words, inclusion and exclusion went hand in hand in the creation of citizenship. The exclusion was largely governed by the nation state mentality. In Maxim Silverman's very succinct articulation the nation state hijacked the concept of citizenship in the nineteenth century, leading to

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<sup>519</sup> Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood, *Citizenship and Identity*, Citizenship & Identity (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1999), 3.

<sup>520</sup> Engin F. Isin, "Citizenship After Orientalism: Ottoman Citizenship," in *Citizenship in a Global World: European Questions and Turkish Experiences*, ed. Emin Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu, Routledge Studies in Governance and Change in the Global Era 3 (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 31, 34, 35.

the end-result that that citizenship could not be separated from exclusionary discourses of race and racism.<sup>521</sup> Hence, citizenship was confused with nationality, and acquired a cultural meaning beyond a political and legal status. Instead of binding people from different cultures it was used by nation state cadres to exclude people who were from “alien” cultures.<sup>522</sup>

Both of these individualistic and nationalistic trends in citizenship formation have been criticized by many and from different perspectives. For example, the model of the individual in liberal citizenship is found not only too abstract, but almost non-existent. It is highly doubtful whether it would ever be possible to isolate individuals from all their group identities and treat as such since every individual goes through identity formation processes in which s/he recognizes and internalized some of his/her characteristics that bind her/him with peers. Indeed, as one scholar notes, “(i)dentities will not wither away; if old ones disappear or recede new ones will be invented and constructed. Human beings are identity-seeking animals, both as individuals and as collectivities.”<sup>523</sup> Stuart Hall also contends that identification as a practice continues for life and that is why he prefers the term identification instead of identity since the latter denotes a moment of ‘being’ whereas the former a process of ‘becoming’; and in this process of becoming people use history, language and culture as resources.<sup>524</sup> As a result of these multiple processes people define themselves in some social groups that in a reciprocal way constitute them. How they think, feel,

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<sup>521</sup> Maxim. Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France*, Critical Studies in Racism and Migration (London ; New York: Routledge, 1992), 26. Cited in Faulks, *Citizenship*, 46.

<sup>522</sup> Faulks, *Citizenship*, 42.

<sup>523</sup> T. K. Oommen, “Introduction: Conceptualizing the Linkage Between Citizenship and National Identity,” in *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism*, ed. T.K. Oommen (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1997), 35.

<sup>524</sup> Stuart Hall, “Who Needs ‘Identity’?,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 4.

judge and express themselves as well as their sense of history and present are highly influenced by their group affinities.<sup>525</sup> Moreover, people may and do demand recognition of their group identities and rights by public authority and those outside the group. As Isaiah Berlin says “what they want, as often as not, is simply recognition (of their class, or nation, or colour, or race) as an independent source of human activity, as an entity with a will of its own, intending to act in accordance with it (whether it is good, legitimate or not), and not to be ruled, educated, guided, with however light a hand, as being not quite fully human, and therefore not quite fully free”.<sup>526</sup> Before Berlin, Otto Gierke, writing in the late nineteenth century, criticized the modern idea of political association since it recognizes only the individual and the state with no intermediaries. On the contrary, Gierke argues, political life embodies “an irreducible multiplicity, which was expressed through group identity and membership”. In fact, from ancient to medieval and early modern times, various intermediary bodies such as guilds, warrior bands, leagues and communes have played crucial roles in political life. He also prophesized that the future of democracy would be under risk unless public law recognizes group rights mediating between the state and the individual.<sup>527</sup> It would not be so wrong to say that his prophecy was justified since throughout the twentieth century different groups (ethnic, religious, gender...) in different part of the world have been struggling against states for the recognition of their group rights, however they define them, in decision making and resource allocation. Some scholars, supporting this stance, claim that social justice necessitates not the neglect of group differences, but

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<sup>525</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 45.

<sup>526</sup> Quoted in Isin and Wood, *Citizenship and Identity*, 32.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 34.

the creation of institutions that, beyond being sensitive to these differences, protect and promote such differences. This means that groups might and should have some special rights peculiar to them for the sake of justice especially when other privileged groups exist. Otherwise, in such a context absolute equality might lead to the birth or continuation of oppression.<sup>528</sup>

For the protection of oppressed or disadvantaged groups some suggest polyethnic rights which refer to legal and financial measures for this purpose. In other words, the state is supposed to promulgate the necessary laws and allocate financial resources for the maintenance of the group. Additionally, minorities should be given the assured right of representation in the political institutions of the country. However, this is not all. They should also possess a certain power and autonomy, meaning self-government in some issues, to be able to protect their existence.<sup>529</sup> This approach contends that citizenship cannot be an individual status because it is meaningful for people only in a wider context of the group. Nevertheless, definition and recognition of group rights might be complicated, leading to some further questions. For instance, firstly, it might be a problem to determine which groups would be defined as 'different and oppressed enough' to be entitled special rights different from others. Secondly, and related to the first, how the borderlines of the groups should be drawn is also complicated. Specifically, how to deal with the internal differences within groups in defining and demarcating that group is unclear. Thirdly, this approach might weaken the relations and communication among groups and create a highly fragmented polity which in turn might constitute a potential risk for a stable democracy. Another threat the group rights approach creates is ignoring

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<sup>528</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 48.

<sup>529</sup> Will. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: a Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford Political Theory (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1995), 124, 181.

the preferences of the individual and thereby opening the way of his enslavement by the collectivity which he might not choose to be a part of it. It is a risk for individual freedom if especially one considers that groups might be oppressive on their members.<sup>530</sup>

Based on this brief historical and conceptual background, how can one approach the Ottoman Armenians of the second constitutional period in general and the Ottoman Armenian intellectuals and middle class in particular? First and foremost, it is obvious that for them citizenship was not a category or relation defined solely on the base of individual separated from his ethnicity or religion. In other words, they did not imagine themselves as just individuals in their relation with state but as Christian Armenians. As such, some of them, especially political party members or sympathizers, emphasized Armenianness more and put Christianity in a secondary position whereas more ‘traditional’ and non-partisan circles defended Christianity and church as indispensable, essential features of Armenian identity. But for both groups of Armenians, ‘Ottoman’ was not a national or cultural identity. Instead, they spoke of ‘Ottoman nations’ rather than a single Ottoman nation. Turk, Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian etc. were national identities but Ottoman was the name of a political will and unity. Depending on the specific context, they highlighted being Armenian or Ottoman. If there was a perceived external threat, for example, the Ottoman spirit was raised, at least discursively; or for the sake of “common good”, however defined, Armenianness might have been set back. Nevertheless, all these had some preconditions. The political system or regime had to be based on justice and equality, which meant for them equality between communities first and foremost. They were willing to witness the implementation of these principles in the

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<sup>530</sup> For a critic of group rights approach see Faulks, *Citizenship*, 90–98.

administrative and judicial acts of the state. Here, one can argue that, due to their past adverse experiences and collective memory, the Armenians sometimes showed an “oversensitive” attitude when they quickly draw political conclusions from ordinary judicial and criminal cases. Another important feature that the Ottoman political and social regime had to have was the provision of the necessary institutions, mechanism for the preservation of Armenian identity, besides others, since they cared about “living as Armenians”.

The most important and concrete incarnation of political principles pursued by the Armenians was the existence, maintenance and implementation of the constitution. As a matter of fact, the Armenian authors and columnists frequently referred to and emphasized the importance of the constitution and “constitutional Turkey”. As long as it was a constitutional regime, they declared, that they would remain “loyal” to it. What Jurgen Habermas defines as “constitutional patriotism”, though in a different context,<sup>531</sup> suits well to their understanding of Ottoman citizenship. In constitutional patriotism, the polity to which people adhere is not a cultural but a political entity at will. During their engagement, they become active members of that polity in pre-defined obligations as well as rights. They are to show fidelity to institutions of the polity rather than a cultural identity, i.e. Ottoman identity defined as a unity on norms, values, language, and daily practices. Common denominators are institutions, rule of law, equal rights and obligations, deliberation, and continuing residency rather than language, religion, morality and common

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<sup>531</sup> Using a concept that was invented much later in order to describe the situation of the Ottoman Armenians of the second constitutional period might have the risk of anachronism. However, in an effort to understand them it would be a deficiency to ignore such a useful concept. Moreover, I think, a researcher should not ignore such a similarity but draw attention to it.

past.<sup>532</sup> It is worth quoting Habermas at some length at this point since he defines the regime which is very similar to what the Armenians imagined:

“The consensus achieved in the course in an association of free and equal citizens stems in the final instance from an identically applied *procedure* recognized by all. This procedure for political will formation assumes a differentiated form in the constitution of a democratic state. Thus, in a pluralistic society, the constitution lends expression to a *formal* consensus. The citizens wish to organize their peaceful coexistence in line with principles which meet with justified agreement of all because they are in the equal interest of all... Everyone should be in a position to expect that all will receive equal protection and respect in his or her violable integrity as a unique individual, as a member of an ethnic or cultural group and as a citizen, i.e. as a member of a polity.”<sup>533</sup>

He adds that some examples such as the United States or Switzerland show that countries that put the constitutional principles at the heart of their political regime do not have to base their citizenship on language, or common ethnic and cultural origins.<sup>534</sup> It is telling that some Armenian commentators of the second constitutional period provided exactly same countries as ideal examples of peaceful coexistence of different ethnic communities. Most Ottoman Armenians just after the 1908 Revolutions would have endorsed these remarks.

In one sentence then, the Armenian version of Ottoman citizenship was an attempt to reconcile citizenship with identity. Being Armenian constituted their primary cultural identity whereas being Ottoman comprised their citizenship as a

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<sup>532</sup> Faulks, *Citizenship*, 52.

<sup>533</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe,” in *Citizenship*, ed. Richard Bellamy and Antonino. Palumbo, The Library of Contemporary Essays in Political Theory and Public Policy (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2010), 344, 345.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.



political category. These were separate and different, but might have been harmonious.

CHAPTER VI:  
MILITARY SERVICE

Citizen armies and mass conscription started to become a norm after the American and French Revolutions, although the relationship between citizenship and military service goes back to ancient Greek city states. This was not only a matter of taking part in a war but had many political implications. First of all, military service was accepted, beside taxation, as a prerequisite to have citizenship and a say in political matters through popular voting. A positive correlation was established between the enlargement of the franchise and expanding of the military service to the different segments of the male population.<sup>535</sup> Even, as Friedrich Engels says, “compulsory military service surpasses general franchise as a democratic agency”.<sup>536</sup> Being eligible for military service was seen both as an indicator and prerequisite of having democratic rights of citizenship.

Modern revolutions were ‘revolutionary’ not only because they opened the way of regular and legitimate mass participation into politics but also they changed the mentality of military radically. More specifically speaking, for example, American and French Revolutions normalized the view that the masses could and should be armed for the protection of the new regime. “The legitimacy of the revolutionary movements and the political democracies they sought to establish rested on the assertion that citizens had been armed and had demonstrated their

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<sup>535</sup> The relation between military service and the citizenship of women is a separate topic that deserves special interest in itself. However, the scope of this chapter does not cover it.

<sup>536</sup> Morris Janowitz, “Military Institutions and Citizenship in Western Societies,” *Armed Forces & Society* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 1976): 186.

loyalty through military service”.<sup>537</sup> This expansion was not restricted with rank and file soldiers but also covered the officer corps. The monopoly of the nobility on the officer corps was broken. In the Western Europe before the French Revolution, being officer was something peculiar to those coming from the families of landed aristocracy. Through the nineteenth century the number of middle class men recruited into the officer crops increased gradually.<sup>538</sup>

Expanding military service means the enlargement of polity on the basis of *equality*. Opening up military service to every social group regardless of race, religion or ethnicity is, at least theoretically, the recognition of their political parity and right for equal participation in decision making processes. Those groups excluded from military service (and accordingly from citizenship) have been, using James Burk’s metaphor, like exiles in their own community. Here, exile is not as physical banishment but as being “prevented involuntarily from serving his or her political community”. This might be provided through different mechanisms like isolation, segregation and discrimination. The critical point is that “the exile is deprived of status and rights, stigmatized in the community, and often made pariah”.<sup>539</sup> For instance in the United States, even before the revolution, participating to the colonial militias as citizen soldiers determined their involvement in local public life. The militias became both a military and political institution and the participation to it clearly meant the declaration of political will. Who were excluded from militia was also a telling indicator of the nature of citizenship. Women, blacks, Indians, indentured servants as well as “loose, idle dissolute persons” were not

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 190, 191.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., 195, 196.

<sup>539</sup> James Burk, “Citizenship Status and Military Service: The Quest For Inclusion by Minorities and Conscientious Objectors,” *Armed Forces & Society* 21, no. 4 (July 1, 1995): 511.

accepted into the militias. Accordingly, they were also excluded from public life and participation to decision making.<sup>540</sup>

The groups who were aware of the meaning of the military service and the status it bestowed had been struggling for ‘the right to fight’. They knew that military service was a way of improving their social position. For example, the blacks in the United States, wanting to prove their worthiness as citizens, demanded to be taken into the army through nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although they actually joined in the war efforts of America just from the early nineteenth century they were not officially allowed to become the members of either the regular army or militias; and this was used as a pretext to block their citizenship. Only during the Civil War they, by the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, were formally allowed to join the army as combatant forces. However, neither this proclamation nor the abolishment of slavery brought full and equal citizenship to the blacks of the United States because of cultural and even ‘legal’ racism. They did not give up but kept showing their willingness to perform citizenship duties. During the Second World War they demanded again a chance to fight. They still thought that if they joined the fight and fought well, a softening in racist policies and practices would follow and their worth and status as citizens would be recognized. Their performance in the WWII as American soldiers did not produce the final recognition either, but it made a change. In 1948 President Truman ended the racial segregation in the army. The following Korean War showed that desegregation increased the morale and fighting performance of black soldiers compared to when they had fought in separate units

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<sup>540</sup> Meyer Kestnbaum, “Citizenship and Compulsory Military Service: The Revolutionary Origins of Conscription in the United States,” *Armed Forces & Society* 27, no. 1 (October 1, 2000): 11, 12. Lawrence Delbert. Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812*, Studies on Armed Forces and Society. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 41–44.

from the white soldiers. Since then their position in both the army and society started to improve gradually.<sup>541</sup> The ‘loyalty’ they showed to their country in the battlefields again and again through more than one hundred years contributed much to the recognition of their equal citizenship. In other words, they gained full citizenship at the cost of their blood.

### Conscription in the Ottoman Empire

Since the idea of modern universal citizenship had not been widely discussed in the Ottoman Empire until the middle of the nineteenth century no direct relation between military duties and citizenship rights had been established before that time. But, before looking at this issue in more detail, a brief account of the conscription in the Empire follows.

In the Ottoman Empire, universal conscription, as a part of the modernizing reforms, started to be discussed toward the end of Mahmud II’s reign when in 1837 the Military Council (*Dar-ı Şura-yi Askeri*) was established. As a matter of fact, one of the domains that were promised to be reformed in the famous Tanzimat Edict of 1839 was military service. The sultan, now Abdulmecid, pledged in this document to reform and regulate the recruitment of soldiers in to the army since there had been many ambiguities and injustices in practice. As it was mentioned in the edict, the duration of the service was so uncertain that some were kept under arms even for life. There were also inconsistencies between the population of the provinces and the

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<sup>541</sup> Burk, “Citizenship Status and Military Service,” 507, 508. For a more complete history of the relation between conscription and citizenship in the United States one can use the followings to which Burk also refers: Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Harvard University Press, 1991).; Russell Frank. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).; Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: a History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York : London: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan, 1986).

number of soldiers they gave. Some provinces gave more than they should have while some others less.<sup>542</sup> Arbitrariness of local governors or *ayans* in drafting soldiers was added as a factor worsening the situation.<sup>543</sup> Despite all, the first formal regulation of conscription could not be produced before 1843 under Rıza Pasha and it was detailed in 1848<sup>544</sup> under the name of *Kura Nizamnamesi* (The Regulations of Lot). This document was largely renewed as *Kura Kanunnamesi* in 1870. Although it had some revisions in 1879 and 1885-7 when the German military advisors were working in Istanbul, this document remained in use until the constitutional revolution of 1908. However, formal existence of such documents does not mean that it was implemented regularly and properly. For example, in regions where feudal relations were dominant those who would be soldiers might have been selected by their chiefs. Also, the lack of accurate and dependable population censuses was another difficulty in the implementation of formal regulations of conscription.<sup>545</sup>

Even though the duration of military service was officially specified in these documents actually it remained to be irregular. There were some who were kept under arms for ten years or even more. Moreover, the material conditions and the treatment of soldiers were generally bad. The resources such as food and garment were extremely insufficient or unorganized. During wartime the conditions got worse. As a matter of fact, in the Russian war of 1877-1878, in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and in the World War I more soldiers died because of diseases such as cholera,

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<sup>542</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925*, ed. Erik Jan. Zürcher (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris ; Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1999), 81.

<sup>543</sup> Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni* (İstanbul: Simurg Yayınları, 2000), 36.

<sup>544</sup> This date is given by Zürcher. Gülsoy gives 1846 as the date of this nizamname: *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>545</sup> Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," 82-84.

typhus and dysentery than because of wounds. As a result, the ratio of deserters was high. For example, the British council of Damascus reported in December 1912 that although in October there was enthusiasm in the region to go to the war, when the news reached about the bad treatment and poor conditions in the army, the ratio of conscripts fell so much that by the end of same month only 30 percent of Muslims candidate soldiers appeared.<sup>546</sup>

Many legal exemptions, both individual and collective, were also in order in these regulations. Generally speaking, collective exemptions were women, non-Muslims (formally until 1855, actually until 1909), the inhabitants of Medina, Mecca, and Istanbul, religious functionaries, student in religious schools and some certain professionals. Additionally, the people who could prove that they were the only breadwinner of their household (*muinsiz*) might have been exempted from the military service. Although its preconditions changed through time a Muslim might have been exempted from military service by either sending someone else instead of himself (*bedel-i şahsi*) or paying a large amount of money (*bedel-i nakdi*).<sup>547</sup>

### Non-Muslim Conscription in Islam and the Ottoman Empire

In Islamic theory war is made in the name of Allah and to expand religion. Thus, it is important that the warriors should have been Muslim not hesitating to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Islam. As a matter of fact, during the time of the prophet and the Four Caliphs the Islamic army was constituted of Muslims. Nevertheless, although this was the norm, Islamic leaders, including the prophet himself, received help from

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<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 86, 87.

the non-Muslims and made alliances with them in wars whenever it was necessary. Later Muslim empires, like the Seljuk or Ottoman states, also followed the same model. For example, Ottoman sultans kept Christian *timarli sipahis* as a tool of their expansionist policies in the Balkans especially in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when there was not adequate number of Muslims in the region to back up the Ottoman army yet. In some instances the Ottoman state also deployed Christian soldiers in castles as gunners. Additionally, the state used non-Muslims in shipyards and navy mostly as technical personnel or labor power. For instance, an official document relayed by Ufuk Gülsoy, says that in the spring of 1790 the Ottoman state demanded 2.200 Armenian and Greek sailors from their patriarchs to man the naval ships. A similar order came to the Armenian Patriarchate also in September 1798 to submit 200 Armenian sailors as soon as possible.<sup>548</sup>

A turning point in the deployment of the non-Muslims in the navy was an imperial edict in June 1837 which specified the formal principles of this action. It stipulated the recruitment of almost 1.500 non-Muslims to be deployed for five years as regular (*muvazzaf*) troops with a certain salary. They would be also exempt from *cizye* for this period. Being a formal part of regular troops was a novelty for Ottoman non-Muslims. Moreover, those who finished their service at the end of five years could continue as professional soldiers if they wished. However, until 1845 no non-Muslim soldier was drafted into the navy again. The draft was quite irregular. The next two calls were in 1847 and 1851. The importance of 1851 call was that it was specified 600 candidates would be determined by lot contrary to previous calls in

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<sup>548</sup> Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 14–18, 23–25.



which the non-Muslim soldiers had been collected through the patriarchs and other local leaders of the communities.<sup>549</sup>

At this time, although there was not any formal regulation to employ the non-Muslims in infantry troops in a similar fashion like in the navy, it was occasionally discussed in different committees. For example, von Moltke says in his memoirs that in the war of 1839 against the forces of Mehmet Ali Pasha, rebellious governor of Egypt, he and Hafiz Mehmet Pasha, who was the commander of Ottoman forces in this war, discussed to use Armenian soldiers in the battlefield. Both agreed that this would be useful. Von Moltke especially supported the recruitment of the Armenians since they, “as a crowded, strong, hard-working, and rich community”, could serve to the state more faithfully and better than Muslim Kurds and Arabs. However, he was not proponent of the conscription of other Christian or Jewish communities, but only Armenians. At the end, this intention of deploying Armenian soldiers in the war against Mehmet Ali could not be realized since Hafiz Pasha was afraid of offending the feelings and honor of conservative Muslims.<sup>550</sup>

The abrogation of *cizye* and extension of compulsory military service to the whole Ottoman male population was first mentioned in a government declaration published in *Takvim-i Vekayi* on May 14, 1855. Following the attempts to take soldiers from the Christians failed largely because of the resistance and escape of people as the Crimean War was still going on.<sup>551</sup> The principle of equality, which was strongly emphasized once again in the Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermanı*) of 1856, necessitated the conscription of non-Muslims just like Muslims. However, since

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 30, 39, 41, 50.

<sup>550</sup> Cited in Ibid., 33, 34.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 58, 60, 61.

some ideological and practical difficulties could not be overcome and necessary ordinances were not promulgated, in practice, this exemption continued until 1909 in the exchange of a certain amount of money. In fact, what was only changed was the name of the exemption tax from *cizye* to *iane-i askeri* and by 1861 to *bedel-i askeri*.<sup>552</sup> Under these circumstances, although there were sporadic examples,<sup>553</sup> who were mainly military doctors of Greek and Armenian origin, the non-Muslims practically remained outside the Ottoman army until 1909.

#### Difficulties, Debates, and Hesitations in the Conscription of the non-Muslims

Beginning from 1830s when the non-Muslim soldiers were taken as regular troops into the navy until after 1909, some serious problems emerged related to their military service. One set of problems was about the religious needs and demands of the Christian sailors. They wanted permission and regulation to celebrate their religious feasts during their service. As a solution to this, in 1847, Halil Rıfat Pasha, the chief commander of the navy, proposed to provide priests in the naval ships<sup>554</sup> where Muslim and Christian soldiers served mixed; so that, the Christian sailors could perform their religious duties on the sea. Although the sultan Abdulmecid tended to permit such a practice it was never implemented since sheik ul-islam Arif Hikmet Efendi opposed this proposal by saying that deploying a priest in each ship

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<sup>552</sup> Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," 89. Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 69, 71.

<sup>553</sup> Anahit Astoyan relays that the second half of the 1860s upon the order of Sultan Abdulaziz five Armenians were accepted to the Military Academy (*Harbiye*). They graduated but were not allowed to promote to the rank of captain. Thus, they had to resign. Anahit. Astoyan, *Hayern Ösmanyanyan Banakum: XIV Darits' Minch 'ev 1918 T'*, Armenians in the Ottoman Army (Erevan: Nairi, 2010), 61.

<sup>554</sup> Since non-Muslims had not been taken to land troops at that time this proposition was only for the navy.

would meant to establish new churches by the hands of the state which was unacceptable for Islam.<sup>555</sup>

The outcomes of both this proposal and the plan to take the Ottoman Armenians into the land troops during the war against Mehmet Ali Pasha in 1839 indicate that the ideological barriers were strong on the way of recruitment of the non-Muslims into the Ottoman army as regular troops. However, there were also other problems and debates. When, after the Reform Edict, the issues was being handled in *Meclis-i Vala* to which the representatives of the religious communities joined for the discussion of this specific issue, one of the questions was whether non-Muslims would serve in separate divisions or mixed with the Muslim soldiers. For one group, they should have served in mixed regiments because this was an opportunity to coalesce religiously and ethnically diverse communities of the Empire, and accordingly to provide Ottoman unity. Others opposing to this option claimed that mixed regiments might have caused troubles among soldiers, not only between the Muslim and non-Muslim soldiers, but maybe more than that, between the Christian soldiers of distinct sects. They argued that coalescing the Christian soldiers belonging to different churches would be more difficult than uniting the Muslim and Christian ones. Another argument by the opposition group was that the Muslim soldiers would not accept to take orders from the Christian officers in mixed regiments. Despite all of these objections, the idea of separate divisions did not prevail since an army organized on the basis of religious sects would be unacceptably fragmented: regiments of the Muslims, the Apostolic Armenians, the Catholic Armenians, the Orthodox Greeks, the Jews...<sup>556</sup> However, in spite of the tendency

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<sup>555</sup> Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 44, 45.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, 65.

toward mixed regiments and endless discussions in various commissions,<sup>557</sup> a compromise could not be produced and the conscription of the non-Muslims had not been implemented until 1909.

Indeed, after the Reform Edict many seemed unhappy with the possibility of the non-Muslims conscription into the army. Some military commanders thought that this would distort the ideological homogeneity and morale of the army based on Islam which was shown as the primary reason of military success. For example, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha claimed that it would not be possible to motivate the non-Muslim soldiers with the Islamic concepts such as *şahadet*, *gaza*, *cihad*. On the other hand, since the Muslim soldiers did not have a concrete idea of fatherland (*vatan*) for which they were ready to die it would be very difficult to find a common motive for both the Muslim and non-Muslim soldiers. He also argued that it would be a problem or dilemma whether the non-Muslims should have been allowed to become commanding officers. If they were not allowed the Western powers could have intervened into the internal organization of the Ottoman armed forces with the pretext of equality which would be deadly. If they were allowed, on the other hand, the Muslim soldiers might have not accepted to obey the orders of the non-Muslim officers and hence, these officers would not be able to direct the army which would be also a deadly situation.<sup>558</sup>

As for the Muslim masses, they were not content either with the idea of the Christians bearing arms. Some thought that it would not be a politically wise action

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<sup>557</sup> For example, upon the considerable decrease in the number of Muslims that were eligible for military service, the drafting of non-Muslims came to the fore once again in 1865 and another commission consisted of high-ranking bureaucrats, one of them being Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, was formed to discuss the issue. After similar argumentations like previous ones they could not overcome their hesitations to draft non-Muslims. *Ibid.*, 99–101.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 100, 101.

to arm the Christians and train them in martial arts since they might have used these skills against the state. There were some statesmen like Ali Pasha who found these worries baseless since previously seceded Christian groups had not been taken into the army and trained but they had revolted anyway, and indeed used arms very well. On the other hand, he claimed that restricting compulsory military service with the Muslims was an injustice against them since it had created an economic imbalance to the detriment of the Muslims. They had spent the most productive years in the army while the Christians and Jews got rich through business and trade. In order to correct this imbalance, the non-Muslims also had to be taken into the army.<sup>559</sup> Ultimately, however, his arguments did not prevail and more conservative views, like Ahmet Cevdet Pasha's, prevailed.

There was also hesitation among the non-Muslims about what would happen to them in the army. It seems that they were worried about possible bad treatment by commanders and officers. On the government side, the abrogation of the non-Muslim exemption meant a great financial loss since the Christians and Jews were paying *cizye*, which was generally the second largest source of income after the tithe. That is one of the reasons why the bureaucracy encouraged people to pay the exemption tax rather than drafting the non-Muslim soldiers even after the Reform Edict of 1856.<sup>560</sup>

When in July 1909 the exemption tax was abolished and the military service became compulsory for every Ottoman male as a requisite of constitutional regime, there was such a practical and ideological background behind the idea of the non-Muslim conscription. Although Zürcher says that there was no enthusiasm even after

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<sup>559</sup> Similar arguments were being expressed in the organ of Young Ottomans, *Hürriyet*, in 1868-1869. Ibid., 103, 104.

<sup>560</sup> Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," 88. Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 63.

1908 on the side of the Christians and their elite stipulated some conditions,<sup>561</sup> the attitude of the Ottoman Armenians toward military service by 1909 was much more complex.

### Armenian Reaction to Military Service after the Revolution

The Ottoman Armenians were in ambivalence toward the compulsory military service. On the one hand they, especially intellectuals and opinion leaders both lay and clerical, were aware of the meaning and value of this 'right to fight', how it would promote the Armenians along the scale citizenship, improve their social and political status. Moreover, they themselves also believed that military service had to be a prerequisite of equal citizenship. Thus, they tried in their writings and speeches to convince the Armenian youth and their families of the importance of the military service and encourage them to carry it out in accordance with legal requirements. On the other hand, the people, especially those who were eligible for drafting and their families, were worried and hesitant about the military service since this would be a new social experience for them promising too much vagueness; there had been nothing about being soldiers in an army in their collective memory . What would happen to their beloved sons away from home for years? How would they be treated in the army by their Muslim commanders and peers? Would they be safe and healthy?

The initial reaction of the Ottoman Armenians to the compulsory military service was joy and excitement since they were aware that this was an indicator of their equal treatment with the Muslims. The edict ordering the conscription of the

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<sup>561</sup>Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," 89.

non-Muslims was published on the first pages of the Armenian newspapers<sup>562</sup>, and in many cities and towns it was publicly read and announced to the people with joyful ceremonies in which the religious figures of both Islam and Christianity, beside civilian military authorities, were present with their prayers and speeches.<sup>563</sup>

The Armenian newspaper *Haratch* of Erzurum, the local organ of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaks*), saluted the conscription of the non-Muslims as the real base of the constitution and freedom.<sup>564</sup> A correspondent writing from *Bulanik*, a district of Erzurum, describes the psychology of local Armenians as such: “[they] breathe a sigh of relief after the exemption tax has been abolished and military service expanded to all as the necessity of the principle of equality”.<sup>565</sup> There are some anecdotes reflecting the same state of mind from different localities. George E. White, who was one of the teachers at the American college of Marsovan, reports an event which happened while they were going to the public office to celebrate the Revolution. He says: “On the way when one of the teachers passed word along the line that henceforth young men of every nationality would be drafted for military service and you ought to have heard those young fellows cheer! Not that they wanted to be soldiers in the Ottoman army; not at all that they wanted to fight anybody; but soldier service for Christians as for Turks meant a step forward recognized manhood and full citizenship.”<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> *Haratch*, Nov.20, 1909, No: 50, p. 1.

<sup>563</sup> For example, such ceremonies were held in the city of Erzurum on Nov. 14, 1909, in *Kghi* on Nov. 13, 1909, in *Bayburt* on Dec. 1, 1909; in Gürün on Nov. 30, 1909; in Tokat on Nov. 26, 1909, in Sivas on Nov.28, 1909. For news reporting the ceremonies see *Haratch*, Nov.20, 1909, No: 50, p. 1, 2; *Haratch*, Nov.27, 1909, No: 52, p. 3; *Haratch*, Dec. 11, 1909, No: 56, p. 2; *Antranik*, Dec. 19, 1909, No:51, p. 3; *Antranik*, Dec. 12, 1909, No: 50, p. 3; *Antranik*, Nov. 28, 1909, No: 48, p. 1, 2.

<sup>564</sup> *Haratch*, July 14, 1909, No: 13, p. 2.

<sup>565</sup> *Haratch*, Aug. 14, 1909, No: 22, p. 2.

<sup>566</sup> G.E. White, *Adventuring With Anatolia College* (Grinnell, Iowa: Herald-Register Publishing Company, 1940), 65.

Almost three months after the abrogation of the exemption tax, an author named as Ardag (apparently a pseudonym) wrote an article with the headline “Armenian Soldier” in which he describes the historical position of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the novelties brought by the new law. A new field (military) opened as a new opportunity for the Armenians to serve their country.

“The Armenians have served their country as peaceful citizens, as a civilizing element that has internalized western enlightening ideals and tried to expand them to the dark horizons of the Ottoman Empire; and they have been frequently martyred for these ideals. Henceforth, the Armenians will serve the same fatherland as honest soldiers who can sacrifice their life for the benefit of his nation and diverse (այլազան) compatriots.

All hands on deck then! Till now the fatherland has needed only our money to maintain its existence; but hereafter it will also demand our blood, and self-sacrifice. Let us raise arm to materialize the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality that are inscribed on the Turkish flag by the golden letters. Let us raise arm to serve our fatherland and show that separatist intentions attributed to Armenians by many are deliberate slander”.<sup>567</sup>

Another voice addressing the Armenian soldiers from Smyrna echoes in a very similar tone:

“You will also wear uniform, have rifle and gunpowder. Finally you will also feel that consciousness of duty to your fatherland which is the biggest reward and only way of sensing satisfaction in heart.

*Reaya*... what a distorted and alien name. After being persecuted under fire, sword, and blood for years we see these days.

We are not any longer *reaya*, we are not any more *gavours*, or tax-payer people either. We are also children of this land, it is also our fatherland, since we are ready to sacrifice our blood to the last drop for the goodness of the country.

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Armenian soldiers...[you have to] be strong against difficulties and privations; the military life necessitates this;

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<sup>567</sup> Ardag, “Armenian Soldier”, *Haratch*, Nov. 3, 1909, No: 45, p. 2.



and show others that the Armenians, people who are accustomed to trade, merchandise, and a soft life, can endure toughness whenever it is necessary.”<sup>568</sup>

There was also an angry reaction against the argument that teaching military crafts to the Christians might have been risky for the well-being of the state. *Haratch* quoting another Armenian journal from Istanbul, *Tziatzan*, exemplifies this reaction:

“It is malevolence to discuss whether the Christians rebel against Ottoman state if they learn military skills. Those, who say this, want to make the Christians think that ‘the Muslims do not want us as soldiers because they want to be the sole arm bearer so that they can massacre us again and again’. Such hesitations are not consistent with the decision of creating the Ottoman nation that we have been promised at the first moment on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July.”<sup>569</sup>

Cleric figures did not have a discourse that was significantly different from civilian arguments. Especially in the provinces, they were talking about the military service quite passionately and encouragingly. The religious leader of Harput district, Vartan Aslanian, gave a lecture at the American school of the city, Yeprad College, to a mixed audience of males and females. The lecture was about military service and how apt the Armenians were to be soldiers. The speaker tried to prove by historical examples that the Armenians had been and still were good soldiers. Therefore, there was no reason to be afraid of military service. He encouraged the students to take this distinguished responsibility heartily *as Ottomans*.<sup>570</sup> Almost nine months after this meeting another cleric, Bsak Vartabed, wrote in the journal of the college:

“Now, hereafter, we [Armenians] have an additional, new patriotic duty. We will give our sons to serve the Ottoman fatherland; in other words, we will gift our sons to

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<sup>568</sup> Hrair Smpad, “The Path of duty: to the Armenian Soldiers”, *Izmirli*, Nov. 6, 1909, No: 5, p. 38.

<sup>569</sup> “Unfounded hesitation”, *Haratch*, June 26, 1909, No: 8, p. 4.

<sup>570</sup> *Yeprad*, 15 March 1910, No: 10, p. 178.

the nation. They will not belong to us anymore. Like Turkish mothers and fathers realize their obligation we will do ours...

Patriotism requires victims and sacrifice; the time will come that we will fight in the field as one heart and soul instead of being only spectators. There, we will take our part of honor or blood, which is martyrdom... Martyrdom requires blood; let it be so without hesitation.”<sup>571</sup>

Not only individual articulations but also institutional declarations reflected the similar approach. Looking at two such declarations consecutively, one from a civil-political organization and the other from a religious authority is very illuminating to understand what the Ottoman Armenians thought about military service. First declaration comes from Erzurum Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-*Tashnaksutyun*). According to this declaration conscription was the first step on the way of equalizing the rights and obligations of the communities and actual sign of solidarity between them.

“We [Armenians] were slaves, now we are free. We were disqualified from bearing arms [but] our children will be brave warriors...[until today] Only a segment of our compatriots, Turkish brothers, have died on the borderlands but hereafter the call of the fatherland does not let us abstain from that sacrifice. Freedom and equality are based on obligations; one, failing in his obligations, does not worth having them.

We think that the compatriots eating together in the same barracks, sleeping side by side, dying in the same field for the noble principles will strengthen solidarity.”<sup>572</sup>

[Go] for the military service without being affected of provocateurs, the covert plans of dark forces that try to confuse our minds...”<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> *Yeprad*, 1 January, 1911, No: 1, p. 9.

<sup>572</sup> Hüseyin Cahit expressed the same argument in *Tanin*, the organ of the Committee of Union and Progress, on June 23, 1909. Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 128.

<sup>573</sup> *Haratch*, Dec. 11, 1909, No: 56, p. 4.

Another declaration almost at the same time by the Armenian prelaty of Erzurum emphasizes the sacrifices in the struggle against despotism for the sake of the constitutional regime and draws a very similar framework:

“As the spiritual father of the community we, in a full conviction and conscious, invite our beloved flock to join military service wholeheartedly in order to protect the liberty that is won through so valuable sacrifices. All Armenian males at the age of conscription, as the genuine children of the country without listening to any overt or covert manipulation and complaining, should happily sacrifice their life for the protection of our dear fatherland and so, our community will become able and worthy of the benefits of equality everywhere and every time”.<sup>574</sup>

The Armenian deputies in the Ottoman parliament also made fervent speeches supporting the extension of military service to all. So, they presented a parallel attitude with their constituents. When the government proposed to continue taking exemption tax from those the non-Muslims who were older than twenty-three years in 1909, they strongly opposed this proposition. Erzurum deputy Ohannes Vartkes claimed that none of the Ottomans had the right to live on others' blood by paying tax. He argued that in order to entrench the idea of equality military service was a must for also the non-Muslims.<sup>575</sup> Istanbul deputy Krikor Zohrap emphasized the urgency of the foundation of fraternity among communities and this was much more important than the budget deficits. He also rejected that the non-Muslims' real aim was to avoid exemption tax:

“We want to give our blood to our fatherland. When we are full of this emotion, claiming that we are trying to avoid exemption tax is not a correct evaluation of our psychology...The aim of the laws that we make here is to establish a feeling of fraternity which is the only way for the salvation of the country. We will form this feeling first and

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<sup>574</sup> “A declaration by the Armenian prelaty of Erzurum”, *Haratch*, , Dec. 22, 1909, No: 59, p. 4.

<sup>575</sup> *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (Ankara, 1988), 169.

foremost through military service...Learning to live together necessitates learning to die together".<sup>576</sup>

While this discussion was happening in the parliament the Armenians in the provinces demanded the promulgation of the law that would make conscription universal as soon as possible. They organized a rally in Sivas on March 31 by the participation of almost 4000 people who demanded the extension of the military service to all as a necessity of equality which was one of the essential principles of the constitution. After the rally two telegrams, relaying the demands of the crowd, were sent, one by the Armenian prelacy, Torkom, and one by the representatives of the crowd, to the Ottoman parliament, the Armenian Patriarchate and the newspapers of Osmanlı and Manzume-i Efkar. The telegram sent by the representatives of the crowd says:

“Today almost four thousand people gathered in a rally and demanded to be active soldiers by the extension of the duty of protecting fatherland as a necessity of the constitution to the Armenians just like the Muslims. People, who are completely powerless to pay the exemption tax and strongly rejecting this situation contrary to equality, want the exact implementation of the constitutional provision.

In the name of people

Mateos Kürkcian, Avedis Aginian, G. Grasdian, V. Vartanian, V. Moskofian”<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>577</sup> *Antranik*, April 4, 1909, 12, p. 1. Turkish text of the telegram reads: “Bugün dört bin kadar ahali bir miting içtima ederek bilfiil hizmet-i askeriyede bulunmak ve muhafaza-i vatan emr-i akdesin İslamlar gibi Kanun-i Esasi mucibince Ermenilere de teşmili takarrür eylemiş ve zaten ahali son derece zebun sefalet bulunmuş idüğünden bedelatın itasına katiyen aciz olup bu gibi mugayir-i musavvat hala şiddetle itiraz ile Kanun-i Esasi hükmünün harfien icrası talep eyler.

Ahali namına

Mateos Kürkçüyan, Avedis Aginyan, G. Grasdyan, V. Vartanian, V. Moskofian”

## Ceremonies Held for the Announcement of the Edict

As mentioned earlier, in many places the edict extending the military service to the non-Muslims was announced publicly in jubilant ceremonies whose programs were almost identical. After the reading of the edict and praying by Muslim clerics in the presence of the Christians, several speeches were made by the highest state officials of the locality, military commanders, religious and civil notables of local Armenian communities. The articulations in these ceremonies, both by the Armenians and the military-civil bureaucrats, are indicative of what they thought and felt about the soldiering of the non-Muslims.

In November 1909 one of these ceremonies was held in the city center of Erzurum. The governor made a speech explaining the meaning and necessity of non-Muslims' military service. He said that if military service was either an honor or burden, in both cases, it was not fair to leave it only to one group. As the children of the same mother every child should have cared about the mother equally. This would be good also for the Muslims. Since they would share this burden they could concentrate more on their economic activities and wealth accumulation. He also addressed the Muslim soldiers in the army:

“Soldier friends! Those compatriots who join you hereafter are not aliens to you; they are those who have been living with you for centuries, your neighbors. They have met your needs by paying tax when you were on the battlefield to protect your home. Today they join you to share personally your exhaustion and difficulty...I am sure that you will accept your compatriots with complete sincerity and affection”.

In the same ceremony *böyük emini* (lieutenant?) Hakkı from local military forces also talked. He says that their sultan had ordered the conscription of the non-Muslim, and

their commanders had convinced them that this would be better for all. “I promise in the name of all my friends that we will greet our new compatriots with love worthy of soldier and Ottomans”.<sup>578</sup> Both from the words of the governor and lieutenant one can infer that there was a certain amount of reluctance among the Muslim soldiers to see the Christians as their peers. While the governor was trying to convince the Muslim soldiers that military service of the non-Muslims would be also better for the Muslims, lieutenant Hakkı implied that they would greet new soldiers with love since the sultan and commanders ordered so not that they thought and felt so.

Almost at the same time a similar ceremony for the same purpose was realized in Sivas. The edict was read in the main square of Sivas in the presence of a large crowd composed of the Muslim and Christian citizens as well as bureaucrats, religious and civil representatives of the Armenian community. After the prayer by a Muslim cleric, the Armenian prelate Torkom Kushakian made a speech in which he emphasized the benefits of the constitution one of which was the conscription of the Christians. Senior Captain (*kolağası*) Şevki Bey focused on the same points in his speech. He addressed the Armenians: “Armenians! You are the children of this country. We are waiting for you with open arms. Come and unite with us for the reformation and defense of the fatherland”. The part of his speech addressing the Muslim soldiers who were already in the army is especially telling: “Muslim soldiers! Hereafter Muslims and Christians are equal to each other because they are honest and sincere children of the same country. Old days had passed not to come back ever. Christians are your brothers. Do not say that their religion is different. Do not blur your mind with this wrong thought in vain. Apply to your superiors, they

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<sup>578</sup> *Haratch*, Nov.20, 1909, No: 50, p. 1, 2.

will elucidate your mind”.<sup>579</sup> One can easily observe in these words again the attempt to persuade the Muslim soldiers who must have been discontent because of the possible presence of the Christians among their ranks. The ideological barriers based on religious differences seem to have been still active at least in the minds of some Muslim soldiers.

Some others, being aware of this tension, emphasized the importance of common experience in the army to resolve the tension due to religious differences. In the edict reading ceremony in *Gürün*, Sivas, on November 30, 1909, Armenian priest Mesrob Kahana Afarian emphasized the honor of being soldier and how living in same barracks, eating from the same pot would contribute to the harmony and fraternity of people from different religions which was very critical for the future of the country.<sup>580</sup>

### Symbolism and Ritualism

The attitude that the Armenians developed toward military service and soldiering had also an aspect that one may name as symbolic-ritualistic which had both religious and earthly elements. Some practices they were engaged in reflected the framework of this symbolic-ritualistic attitude. For example, those Armenian youngsters who were called for military service were gathered at St. Sarkis Church in *Kıncılar*, Adapazarı, where the priest, Der Arantsar, made a speech and afterwards the cortege, singing hymns, proceeded to St. Sarkis, a sacred location of pilgrimage, where also speeches were made. Finally, the group departed for *Akhisar* from the train station in

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<sup>579</sup> *Antranik*, Nov. 28, 1909, No: 48, p. 1, 2.

<sup>580</sup> *Antranik*, Dec. 19, 1909, No: 51, p. 3.

the evening.<sup>581</sup> This event showed how the Armenians perceived the military service in the Ottoman army. They behaved as if they went to a religious journey.

In some other instances they ‘played’ soldiering eagerly before they became eligible for military service. On May 2, 1912 a gymnastic show was carried out by a group of athletes who were the students of Armenian Communal School of *Tokat/Yevdokia* in the field near to the monastery of St. Hovagim Anna. A large crowd, including the high officials of local bureaucracy such as *mutasarrif*, watched the show. The space was ornamented with flags, and it started with a Turkish march sung by the students and a speech in Turkish by one of the students, R. Berberian. After this speech, the military gymnastics started under the leadership of Manuel Chubukchian. If we repeat the comments by *Iris*, the newspaper that reports the event, the students were so successful in these military exercises that they proved they would be good soldiers serving the Ottoman fatherland. More interestingly, the students presented a military maneuver in which they were divided into two as the Ottoman and enemy forces. The allegedly Ottoman forces aimed to capture a fortification hold by the enemy forces and they succeeded, which caused a great joy among spectators: “What was a happiness to see the ardor of those little soldiers who even now inspire confidence and faith in the [heart of the] spectators. By the way, it is an honor for us to mention that the noble governor presented his special appreciation and praise [of this performance].”<sup>582</sup> This is a quite interesting example because it demonstrates that the Armenians did not only accept compulsory military service as an inevitable practice but also embraced the militaristic spirit of the time. During the second constitutional period, especially during and after the Tripoli

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<sup>581</sup> *Putanya*, May 10, 1910, No: 14, p. 164.

<sup>582</sup> *Iris*, June 1, 1912, No: 4, p. 13, 14.



(1911) and Balkan Wars (1912-13), the militaristic atmosphere under the cover of patriotism, raised so high that militaristic drills and shooting practices entered into the civil secondary and high schools.<sup>583</sup> This general mood of the environment had also influenced Ottoman Armenians as they imagined themselves as Ottoman soldiers fighting against enemies; they seemed to internalize this idea.

### Hesitations and Fears

Despite all positive attitudes against military service among the Armenians, they also showed some hesitations, reservations, and even fears. There are many instances in which one can observe these worries and the efforts of the opinion leaders in the press to take the load of Armenians' minds. The psychology of the non-Muslims from *Yomra*, Trebizond, can be given as an example of this hesitation about military service. The correspondent says that although the non-Muslims of the region had been so enthusiastic about being soldier instead of paying exemption tax, when headmen called for the medical examinations of those who were eligible for the service, some hesitation and doubts occurred. Some tried different ways of circumventing military service. They were suspicious about how the non-Muslim soldiers would be greeted and treated by the Muslim soldiers, and also how much the physical conditions in the army would be difficult. The correspondent himself, however, thinks that these hesitations and doubts were groundless. According to him, every Ottoman citizen had equal responsibility in the protection of the fatherland. It would be unjust in a constitutional country to let only the Turks in the army. Some

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<sup>583</sup> Mehmet Ö. Alkan, "II. Meşrutiyet'te Eğitim, İttihat Ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Milliyetçilik, Militarizm Veya 'Militer Türk-İslam Sentezi'," in *II. Meşrutiyet'i Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Ferdan Ergut (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2009), 68.

conditions of military service might have been quite harsh but flight should not have been the solution. On the contrary, according to the author the Armenians should have struggled to improve the conditions of the service through complaining and petitioning after attending the army. Moreover, if one wants freedom he had to take action. “Now it is time to show our Muslim compatriots by action that we are also men, have heart and know protecting the fatherland”.<sup>584</sup>

Almost one year later, this time *Tokat* Armenians got anxious because of the rumor that the Armenian soldiers drafted from the city three months before were in anguish. According to the newspaper *Iris*, reporting the rumor, this must have been an exaggeration, if not a lie. According to the comment of the newspaper, even if there was a piece of truth in this news the Armenians should have not been hopeless and stood firm: “It is true that our children parted from our bosoms, we are deprived of their face. But they went to perform a sacred duty, to protect the fatherland with their blood. This is a real honor that suits only military people and compared to this honor, every suffering and annoyance is negligible”.<sup>585</sup>

The Armenian newspaper *Putanya* of Adapazarı gave a similar reaction to the news that some Armenian soldiers deserted from the army. The journal criticizes this behavior even if they were right in complaining of the conditions in the army and the treatment of non-Muslim soldiers by Turkish officers. Despite every difficulty and improper treatment they should have not left their position. *Putanya* says addressing Armenian soldiers:

“First of all, feel the honor of being soldiers, this honor is yours...Sacrifice is one of the natural necessities of soldiering; show that you are able to do that sacrifice...To the

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<sup>584</sup> *Haratch*, P. E. T., ‘We do not pay exemption tax we will enlist in the army’, Nov. 6, 1909, No: 46, p. 2, 3.

<sup>585</sup> *Iris*, Dec. 1, 1910, No: 1, p. 6.

arms Armenian soldiers, protect the honor of your race as its real soldiers. Follow the example of Vartan Mamigonian<sup>586</sup>, who used all his vigor to make the Persians understand that the Armenian is not sluggish.”<sup>587</sup>

Here one sees that Vartan Mamigonian, an important historical figure and hero frequently used by Armenian nationalist discourse, is instrumentalized to encourage the Armenian youth for soldiering in the Ottoman army. Indeed, this is not the only example of the efforts that tried to prove that soldiering had been an essential part of the historical Armenian identity both in the past and present. Through this discourse they aimed to help the youngsters overcome their worry and hesitancy. According to this way of thinking, since the Armenians were “genetically” apt to soldiering there was nothing to be afraid of being soldiers in the Ottoman army. They could and should have done this. “The Armenian, wherever he is born, lives, or immigrates, is able to present his unique abilities and talents very soon; and instead of being burden, renders very useful services to the government and society of the country to which he belongs” says one of the editorials in *Antarnik* of Sivas. Later, it gives the names of the famous Armenian generals in the Russian army, Melikof, Hgukasof, as the evidence of this fact. Not only in Russia but also in Iran, Egypt, and the USA the Armenians had been serving as successful soldiers. Why not in the Ottoman Empire? Under these ‘global’ conditions it would be a shame for the Ottoman Armenians to avoid military service. However, it should be added that current tension between the Armenian Patriarch, Yeghishe Turian, and the government because of the government’s indifference and misconduct in the investigation of the Adana

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<sup>586</sup> This is an Armenian legendary military figure who commanded a small Christian Armenian army against a much larger Zoroastrian Persian army in 5<sup>th</sup> century in order to resist conversion to Zoroastrianism. He has been a frequent motif in Armenian nationalistic discourse.

<sup>587</sup> “To Armenian Soldiers”, *Putanya*, Apr. 30, 1911, No: 11, p. 413.

massacres and the resignation of the patriarch as a result of this tension were the factors puzzling Armenians.<sup>588</sup>

Sometimes those Armenians who tried to circumvent the military service were denounced by other Armenians as one incident from Bitlis showed. When some rich Armenians of the city applied some tricks to make their sons exempt from military service other Armenians, mostly artisans and their sons, exposed this by complaining to the governor because they regarded such attempts as an insult to the Armenian honor. The correspondent says that this reaction was just like a moral slap on the face of those Armenians who had tried to cheat. Complaining Armenians thought that those Armenians who avoided the soldier service to the fatherland were scums.<sup>589</sup>

The main reason behind this kind of attempts to avoid the military service was the obscurity about what would happen in the army. Since there was no collective memory on this kind of experience transferred from older generations, the Armenian people did not know what they would face. Some publications, giving examples from soldiers' life, tried to relieve the anxiety of candidate soldiers and their families. For example, a newspaper in Sivas, *Hoghtar*, published a small interview with an anonymous Armenian soldier in the Ottoman army. He says that in the beginning they, as Armenian soldiers, were afraid of being in the army. However, within a few days seeing their officers' fair and humane attitude toward them, they adapted to the environment and admired their commanders. This soldier talks about the benefits of the military life in the barracks. He praises the discipline, hygiene, and kindness he experienced in the army. He even says that the military training is so

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<sup>588</sup> *Antranik*, Sept. 26, 1909, No: 39, p. 1, 2.

<sup>589</sup> *Haratch*, Feb. 9, 1910, No: 11, p. 3.

marvelous that they feel stronger, and healthier. His last message to the candidate Armenian soldiers is that “there is nothing to be afraid of in this life, you can be sure”.<sup>590</sup>

Another example to make the Ottoman Armenians familiar with the military life is a booklet in Armenian, published in Istanbul in 1911, in which an Armenian male who had finished his military service narrated his experiences in verse through 32 pages with photographs, beginning from the moment he lived his hometown (Istanbul).<sup>591</sup> The author, using the nickname “Immortal” (Anmerug/Անմեքրուկ), dedicated his book to the “newly called Armenian soldiers”. In the preface he says that after returning from military service he was continuously asked by his friends that how the Turkish soldiers treated the Christian peers. As a reply, he published a letter (Turkish but in Armenian script) he received from his Turkish fellow soldiers after returning home. In this letter these fellows, who call Anmerug “our brother”, said that they would never forget him and relayed the longing and greetings of all his friends who were still under arms. Anmerug put this letter at the beginning of his booklet as a sign of the warm relations between the Christian and Muslim soldiers, and accordingly show that there was nothing to be afraid of. He also informs the prospective soldiers about the daily life and drills in the army in quite detail by giving all names of the tools, movements and maneuvers. He wrote it as a guide for new recruits. He also frequently emphasizes the ethnic diversity of the soldiers and fraternity among them.

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<sup>590</sup> *Hoghtar*, March 17, 1912, No: 11, p. 44.

<sup>591</sup> Anmerug, *Andranik Zinwor: Lusankarnerov* (K. Polis: Tpagrut'iwñ V. ew H. Tēr-Nersēsean, 1911).

Beside unfamiliarity about daily life in the barracks, the lack of information on legal-bureaucratic rules and procedures of the military service had also its share in the hesitancy the Armenians had. Indeed, the rules regulating who was eligible for the service and who might have been exempt were quite complex. For example, the position of each individual male in his family and his status as tax payer and property owner were critical points in determining the eligibility. A male who did not have any other male sustaining his family might have been exempt from the military service or postponed it. But this rule had quite complicated details about who could be counted as a sustainer (*muin*). For example, a father older than seventy years or a brother younger than fifteen years could not be counted as a sustainer of a household. Likewise, the son of a widow woman who did not have any other son, son in law, male grandchild, or nephew older than fifteen years could not be drafted.<sup>592</sup> There were so many other rules of similar kind that for an ordinary man it might have been difficult to understand. Armenian newspapers tried to clarify this confusion by publishing the formal regulations again and again.<sup>593</sup> The Armenian Patriarchate also sent circulars to the provinces to inform the people about the military service procedures.<sup>594</sup> They especially explained under what conditions age correction<sup>595</sup> was possible and valid for the military service. As an example of these efforts, the Armenian prelate of Sivas sent a circular to the locations under its jurisdiction and

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<sup>592</sup> Garapet. Solaghian, *Kanonagir Och '-islam Tarreru Zinuoragrut' ean* (K. Polis: Tpagrut' iwn Ö. Arzuman, 1910), 6, 8.

<sup>593</sup> "The Conscription of the Armenians", *Haratch*, Sept. 22, 1909, No: 33, p. 3; *Iris*, May 15, 1911, No: 5, p. 4; *Iris*, June 15, 1911, No: 7, p. 5.

<sup>594</sup> "Important Instructions about the Military Service of Non-muslims", *Iris*, Dec. 25, 1910, No: 3, p. 6.

<sup>595</sup> As a matter of fact, because of errors in birth records some non-Muslim were drafted although they were much younger than the age of eligibility. Upon the complaints from both these people and the highest religious authorities the government decided to correct the records by applying to church and synagogue records whenever it was necessary. Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 155.

explained who would be exempt from the compulsory service: a)those who were born before 1299 or after 1314 b)those who had a father older than 70 years or a brother younger than 15 years c)those who had an internal disease d)those who had not a brother and his father was so ill that he could not work [even if the father was younger than 70] e)those who had an orphan to care from close relatives f)those who paid a certain amount of annual tax g)those who had another brother at the age of military service (only one of them was to be taken) h)those married ones who had no parent but his father in law older than 75 or brother in law younger than 15 i)those who were the teacher of the sole school in the vicinity of a residential area.<sup>596</sup>

A critical point for those at the age of military service was to have and carry birth certificate (*nüfus tezkeresi*) without which they would be considered as draft dodgers and subject to heavy punishment.<sup>597</sup> So, Armenian authorities warned them to get one as soon as possible if they had not had one yet. There were, beside institutional attempts, also some individual initiatives to inform people such as a lawyer, G. Solaghian, translated the draft code of non-Muslims into Armenian and published it as a booklet by adding some explanatory notes.<sup>598</sup>

Although there was no general or categorical opposition from any segment of the Ottoman Armenian population against the universal military service there were some reservations or propositions related to the practical side of the service. They thought that army should have had a serious reformation to solve some essential problems. The duration of military service was ambiguous and arbitrary, the payment was too low, the aptitudes of soldiers were not considered in any way, the

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<sup>596</sup> *Antranik*, Dec. 5, 1909, No: 49, p. 3, 4.

<sup>597</sup> *Iris*, May 1, 1911, No: 4, p. 6.

<sup>598</sup> Solaghian, *Kanonagir Och '-islam Tarreru Zinuoragrut 'ean*.

recruitment was done regardless of seasonal, agricultural works etc.<sup>599</sup> Additionally, Christian religious authorities were especially worried about whether the Christian soldiers would be able to follow the practices and holy feasts of their religion in the army. They also worried that Christian soldiers might have been pressured for conversion to Islam during their military service. The patriarchs of Christian communities, including the Apostolic and Catholic Armenian patriarchs, gave separate proposals to the government suggesting some measures to avoid these risks. Some of the measures they demanded were gathering Christian soldiers in separate regiments from the Muslim soldiers and allocating some space for their worshipping, employing permanent priests like imams in the army, prohibiting conversion during military service. The employment of the Christian officers as soon as possible was also seen as a guarantee to inhibit the pressure on the Christian rank and file soldiers.<sup>600</sup>

One of the issues was about where soldiers should have carried out their duty: in the vicinity of their hometown or wherever the government sent them? Some claimed that military service in or near homeland was more suitable to the geographical and cultural realities of the Empire. *Haratch*'s editorial writer Libarid, after emphasizing that military exemption tax had been a financial burden on non-Muslims that deteriorated their economic situation, especially of peasant households, adds that still there were some critical points to be decided, one of which was where new soldiers would serve, in or close to their hometown or far corners of the Empire. The author says that he supported their service in or close to their homeland. If a soldier was sent to far places he might have had difficulty in adaptation since he

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<sup>599</sup> G. F. Abbott, *Turkey in Transition* (s.l.: General Books, 2010), 43.

<sup>600</sup> Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 142, 143.



would meet an unfamiliar environment, climate, culture and even language. Possible climate differences that might have been risky for his health were serious enough to consider. Additionally, the longing for his home, parents etc. for long years might have harmed the motivation and capacity of serving of a soldier. If one also added the financial cost of sending soldiers to remote places it would seem more suitable to keep soldiers in or close their hometown.<sup>601</sup> Almost two months after this article, *Haratch* reports a typhus epidemic among the troops in *Kop* as the proof that young men should have done their military service near to their hometown. *Haratch* reports that there were many dead, especially among those soldiers who came from places like Mersin, Urfa where a hot climate reigned. Those who were not accustomed to the weather conditions of Erzurum could not resist the disease.<sup>602</sup> Ultimately speaking, the government did not accept these arguments and distributed soldiers to every corner of the empire regardless of their birthplace.

Despite all hesitations, worriers, and some absenteeism the lots of Christian soldiers were drawn in many cities and towns of Anatolia without any major problem. The results of the lots drawn in June 1910 for those Christians, who had been born in 1305 (1889-1890) in Sivas province, might give an idea about how the conscription actually went. Basically there were two groups: first draft (*tertib-i evvel*) who were immediately taken into the army and second draft (*tertib-i sani*) whose service was postponed to the next term due to either a personal excuse or quota determined by the government.

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<sup>601</sup> "Second Issue", *Haratch*, Dec. 29 1909, No: 61, p. 2.

<sup>602</sup> *Haratch*, March 5, 1910, No: 18, p. 3.

Table I: The results of lots for Christian soldiers in Sivas in June 1910<sup>603</sup>

Region	First Draft	Second Draft	Total
Sivas and its environs	203	20	223
Tokat	160	10	170
Şarkışla	104	11	115
Herek	100	14	114
Şebinkarahisar	83	5	88
Amasya	82	90	172
Gürün	80	4	84
Divrik	72	7	79
(Vezir)Köprü	54	5	59
Niksar	45	5	50
Ladik	44	4	48
Köprü	42	5	47
Kangal	26	2	28
Darende	27	4	31
Zile	22	2	24
Gümüşhacıköy	7	5	12
Mesudiye	5	4	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1156</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>1353</b>

The number of soldiers taken from each community was one of the routine news of Armenians newspapers. For example, *Putanya* reported on April 20, 1911 that 41 youngsters departed from Izmit to Istanbul for their military service. 15 of them were Armenian, 7 Greek and the rest Muslim.<sup>604</sup> In December of the same year, the number of Armenian first draft soldiers in Papert (Bayburt) was 330.<sup>605</sup>

#### Non-Muslim Officers

By 1909 the non-Muslims became eligible not only for military service as a citizenship duty for a certain limited period but also the option to choose military as a

<sup>603</sup> Armenian newspaper *Antranik* relays from official gazette of Sivas governorship. *Antranik*, June 12, 1910, No: 69, p. 3; *Antranik*, June 19, 1910, No: 70, p. 3; *Antranik*, June 26, 1910, No: 71, p. 3; *Antranik*, July 24, 1910, No: 75, p. 3.

<sup>604</sup> *Putanya*, April 20, 1911, No: 10, P. 408.

<sup>605</sup> *Haratch*, Dec. 11, 1909, No: 56, P. 2.

profession became available for them. Especially Christian religious authorities impelled the government to take measures to educate the Christian officers and deploy them in the army as soon as possible. They regarded the existence of Christian officers in the army, beside staffed priests, as a guarantee that the religious identity and needs of the Christian soldiers would be protected because they were worried that Christian soldiers might have been forced conversion during their service. Because of this, Christian religious authorities demanded the prohibition of the conversion during the military service. Additionally, some demanded the recruitment of the non-Muslims in separate regiments from the Muslims. The government also agreed that the deployment of the Christian officers might have helped to the development of more positive thoughts and feelings among the Christians toward military service; but it did not accept the idea of separate divisions.<sup>606</sup>

As a matter of fact, after the doors of army and military schools were opened for Armenians, along with other non-Muslims, they showed a certain interest to attend the military schools. Even before the law extending military service to all regardless of religion the military schools had opened for non-Muslims since six Armenian boys in Sivas entered local military school as early as January 1909.<sup>607</sup> It was so important for the Armenians to enter these schools that some volunteered Armenian teachers opened free courses for the Armenian youth in order make them pass the entrance examination of the Military Academy (*Harbiye*).<sup>608</sup> Newspapers announced the preconditions and procedure to enter military schools like *Haratch* did

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<sup>606</sup> Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, 143, 144.

<sup>607</sup> *Antranik*, Jan. 24, 1909, No: 1, p. 4.

<sup>608</sup> Astoyan, *Hayern Ösmanyan Banakum*, 64. Relayed from newspaper *Jamanak*, April 14-27 1910.

by quoting Captain M. Akif, the vice principal of military secondary school (*rüştiye*) of Erzurum. There was an exam every candidate had to take changing according to the level of the school they were willing to enter.<sup>609</sup> They had a sense of proud of becoming Ottoman officers; it was perceived as a source of prestige.

For a brief evaluation it can be said that the approach of the Ottoman Armenians to military service after 1909 was generally positive. At the political and ideological level they were enthusiastic about being soldiers in the Ottoman army because of the meaning they attached to it. This does not mean that at the level of practice there was no problem, or no one avoiding military service. However, there was no categorical resistance based on church, party, or class.

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<sup>609</sup> *Haratch*, Sept. 8, 1909, No: 29, p. 4.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The Armenian genocide is not the direct concern of this dissertation. However, not only the Armenian genocide but any other genocide cannot be understood and explained if one just focuses on only actual killings or happenings once mass killings starts. What was the situation and what people thought before the point beyond which everything becomes irreversible, what paved the way to the ethnic cleansing, what kind of a political and social environment might let such horrible things are more critical questions. This dissertation can be read as a contribution to the discussion of such questions in the Ottoman Armenian context, although it does not ask this kind of questions directly, since it brings to the fore a large body of primary material that reflects the perspective of the contemporary actors of the time mentioned.

This text aims to shed light on perceptions and evaluation of the Ottoman Armenians in the second constitutional period about their relations with the state and the other groups as well as within the Armenian community itself and about the changes in the state apparatus in making the constitutional government and execution of these changes. By doing so it tries to widen the perspective of the historiography of the second constitutional period in which non-Muslims are rarely handled as autonomous subjects. Although the literature of the second constitutional period is quite rich there is almost no work primarily handling the societal relations of the Armenian community and their mentality and psychology in this period. This work

cannot claim to fill that lacuna by itself since it cannot exhaust the existing primary material but it might be seen as a scout mission to explore the mental territory of the people by making a rough map, pinpointing some of main issues, debates, disagreements of that time, for those who are willing to explore the mindset of those Armenians. Thus, it will hopefully enrich the comprehension of the second constitutional period, besides of the discussion of the genocide.

Those Armenians' societal relations can be analyzed under the categories of internal and external.<sup>610</sup> Internal relations mean the relations among Armenian institutions, parties, and social classes. External relations, on the other hand, can be analytically divided into two as vertical and horizontal relations where the former denotes the relations with the state and the latter the relations with non-Armenian ethno-religious communities, i.e. Turks, Kurds.

### Internal Relations

The most salient characteristic of the internal relations was the highly fragmented social and political structure and the fervent conflicts it produced. Firstly, the Revolution made the struggle between the old and the new elites surface. The old elites largely consisted of clerics and conservative intellectuals close to the Armenian communal administration whereas the new elites were young, educated professionals who were mostly members of the Armenian political parties. The Revolution created such an atmosphere that the old and the new started to be clearly demarcated in the minds of people and they positioned them in a conflictual pattern. This division was

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<sup>610</sup> This should be understood only as an analytical categorization. It does not imply that the Armenian community was a homogeneous or monolithic cluster with strict boundaries and whose relations with the outside were formally defined and restricted.

seen not only in politics but also in cultural and daily life. In every ground the Armenians were accusing of each other as “old fashioned” or “light-headed”.

Secondly, and in a sense as an extension of the first division, there was also a continuous skirmish between the partisans, namely the members of the parties of *Tashnaksutyun* and *Hnchak*, and the neutrals. Basically, the neutrals were blaming the Armenian political parties of being too “radical” and aggressive, risking the security of the Armenian community, and eroding the familial values of the community whereas the partisans claimed that those criticizing the parties were supporting the status quo in which Armenian masses were oppressed by an oligarchy.

Third dimension of the inner conflict was about the weight of the religion and clergy. Due to the logic of the millet system and traditions of the Armenian community clerical figures had been accepted as communal leaders. When their status given by the state and their spiritual influence were combined they acquired a high amount of social power in the Armenian community. Especially after the Revolution secular, modern educated Armenian intellectuals started to question their position and challenged them by saying that the men of church were impotent and not qualified enough to cope with the difficulties and necessities of modern political and social life. As might be expected, the clergy was not willing to lose its power and started to struggle through a counter propaganda that those who were opposing the clergy were atheists, liars or hypocrites. Despite all, one can say that the clergy preserved its social and political role in the administration of the community and its relations with the state but it has to face with the challenge of the secular intellectuals and share its power with them.

Fourthly, there was a group of people, especially provincial intellectuals and middle class, who were questioning the traditional role of leadership played by the

Armenian community of Istanbul and the Armenian National Assembly of Istanbul that was elected by the popular vote. Among the elites in the provinces there was a general opinion that Istanbul Armenian circles were conservative, corrupted and inhibiting the progress of the Ottoman Armenian community. They were also accused of being indifferent to the problems of the Armenians in the provinces. Moreover, they demanded the correction of the injustices in the communal administration to the detriment of the provinces. The most important of these injustices was the composition of the assembly since only one fourth of the seats were allocated to the Armenians in the provinces who were almost 90% of all Ottoman Armenians. Instead, the seats should have been distributed in a ratio in accordance with the Armenian population of each city. Prevailing situation, which had been designed in the conditions of 1860s, was evaluated as obsolete and unacceptable especially when the ideas of equality, justice and representative democracy gained importance in the country by the re-promulgation of the constitution. One of the main arguments of those who demanded a fair assembly was that the Armenian community, demanding the democratization of the Ottoman state, cannot keep undemocratic practices unchanged in its internal administration for the sake of consistency. The destiny of the whole Ottoman Armenians could not be left to the will of an assembly that was not indeed representative of the majority of the constituents. On the other side, Istanbul Armenians might have despised the provincials as ignorant and arrogant; at least some of them implied this. Even, one can come across articles describing the provincials as such in the Istanbul Armenian press. In other words, they claimed that the provincial people were not qualified enough to participate in the administration of the community.



Lastly, the Ottoman Armenian community was divided not only through the axis of the old and the new or religious and secular but new elites, namely the Armenian political parties, were also divided within themselves; and here the most significant and in fact devastating split was between the parties of *Tashnaksutyun* and *Hnchakian*. Different from other conflicts, this was not because of ideological disagreements or contradictory political values or priorities. Here, the question was basically about who would lead the community, and take the power. However, this does not mean that this dispute was less severe than others; on the contrary there were some instances in which even blood was spilled. Despite all efforts of mediation by different arbitrators, these parties, let alone being united, could not even agree on the alliance in the parliamentary elections which would most probably increase the number of Armenian deputies. On the contrary, they gave priority to constitute election alliances with other Muslim Turkish parties.

From another macro view the members of the Armenian community might be categorized under mainly two groups, one is more prudent and maybe even timid, the other more assertive and demanding. The former promoted the political participation and visibility of Armenian community whereas the latter pointed other social domains such as economy, science or art where Armenians should have been working more. They should have allocated their mental and physical energy to these fields.

All of these fervent and even violent inner fragmentations caused indeed a great amount of worry and anxiety among the Armenians. Many people were aware of the threats and risks produced by such a high level of inner disunity since polarization did not remain restricted to political institutions but diffused to all social institutions and structures such as schools, churches, voluntary associations and

clubs. They wrote many articles warning that unless the Armenian parties and groups became united the community would become extremely vulnerable. In fact one can argue that internal organization of the Armenian community produced conflict and tension maybe more than harmony and cooperation. They had a sense of danger; they frequently used expressions such as “being at the edge of a cliff”. Today, it is easy for us, as people who know “the end of the story”, to approve these concerns.

However, the only reason of the Armenians’ worrisome psychology was not the internal disunity. They were not sure or felt secure of their relations with the state and neighboring communities. It is true that the Revolution raised the hopes once again. It was a time of rising political consciousness; and the understanding of modern participatory citizenship got popular. The Ottoman Armenians were ardent champions of this understanding since they would benefit much if modern citizenship had been actually implemented. Their intelligentsia, being very conscious about the importance of this, propagated the participation of people, Armenian or not, to the decision making in not only macro political debates but also daily issues that would directly influence their life quality. Nevertheless, horrible events like Adana massacres and unfulfilled promises by the CUP as time went by made them hesitant and disappointed. They indeed lived between hope and frustration like a continuous ebb and flow. It seems that they wanted to believe that everything would be better. They sensed that they did not have any other choice but hoping; in other words hoping was compulsory for them. They had no meaningful choice other than trusting the promises by the state or the CUP despite countless disappointments. Moreover, they were in a kind of victim psychology. Most of them believed that they had been subject of an extermination policy for half a century. Every additional frustration refreshed this feeling and memory.

## External Relations: State

In the modern state the relation between people and the state is defined on the basis of citizenship. In other words, normatively speaking, mutual rights and obligations of the people and the state are determined by the way they describe and implement the citizenship. This was also true for the Ottoman Armenians who had tried to create a new way of relation with the state since the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the preconditions of having a secure, free and comfortable future for the Armenians was to have a relation with the state on the basis of equal Ottoman citizenship. This was a struggle inherited from the nineteenth century but Hamidian reign was a time when the efforts of establishing equal citizenship had been suspended due to his Islamist policy favoring the Muslims over others. The initial optimism of the Revolution made the people believe that this time equal citizenship project would be accomplished. Nevertheless, the problem was that everybody did not understand the same thing from Ottomanism and Ottoman identity and how it would be related to and compromised with other identities of individuals such as Muslim, Armenian, Christian etc...The Armenians, who made a definite separation between the Hamidian era and the constitutional regime, also formulated what they understood from Ottoman identity. First and foremost, they evaluated equality and justice as inseparable elements of Ottoman citizenship; they were very sensitive about the observation and realization of these principles. They immediately reacted whenever they witnessed a talk or practice contradictory to the equality and favoring the Islam and Muslims over the others. Even they did not approve the declaration of *cihad* during the wartime because it implied that the Ottoman state was a state of Islam.

They also rejected the analogies in which the Turks were depicted as the head of the Empire and the other groups as extremities since arms and legs work by the order of the head. The Armenians' expectations of equality and justice from the new regime were so high that they evaluated every single event involving public figures from this perspective. Every judicial case involving an Armenian victim or plaintiff was observed carefully because in their eyes the treatment they faced in such cases was an indicator of whether the Armenians as a community were accepted as equal by the state. If an aggressor went unpunished, which happened very frequently, they strongly protested. They continuously tested the sincerity of the state, the CUP and Muslims about the equality and questioned whether the Muslims were ready to internalize the idea of equality with the Christians.

If all these principles had been provided, they thought, the Ottoman citizenship could have been implemented without much difficulty. From their perspective, there was no contradiction between being Ottoman and Armenian at the same time. These were neither mutually exclusive nor negatively correlated categories in their eyes as long as being Ottoman was defined as a legal-political category rather than a cultural identity based on common religion, language, values, and practices. For them cultural affairs such as religion, education, language belonged to the private domain and should have been governed by the autonomous administration of the communities as it had been done hitherto. In their understanding this was not an impediment for the realization of the Ottoman citizenship. They generally imagined two sets of responsibilities: one to the Ottoman state, the other to the Armenian community. Overall, they did not see communal autonomy in certain affairs contrary to equal citizenship. They emphasized the communal autonomy in such affairs because they regarded this as the main

protection against assimilation. As a matter of fact, when the CUP lead government tried to intervene with the curriculum of the Armenian schools many Armenian deputies, authors, journalist severely criticized this attempt. Education and language (and religion for some but not for others) were regarded as the way of being and staying Armenian while adopting the Ottoman citizenship.

In their model not only communal but also regional autonomy had a critical role. In other words, they argued that in the government of the country decentralization should have been a general political and administrative principle. This was, they claim, good not only for the Armenians but for whole of the country. One of the main arguments of them in this discussion was that the Ottoman Empire was a country where there were many different religions, regions, cultures and even climates. In such a vast country if all rules were determined at the center/capital, some of these rules might have been beneficial for some regions while detrimental for others. Therefore, issues other than foreign relations, military, currency, customs, railroads, postal service should have been left to regional authorities and bodies that should have been elected by the popular vote in each province. Also, for the sake of equality and democracy, more Christians should be employed in these local bodies and public offices.

In order to define the Armenians' position vis-à-vis the state one can utilize the categorization made by Ellen Comisso. She examines possible attitudes of national groups in an empire under five categories: insurrectionaries, pragmatists/accommodationists, collaborationists/assimilationist, parochialism, and anationals (see Chapter 4). If one examines the distribution of the Ottoman Armenians along these categories just after the 1908 Revolution he can say that the categories of insurrectionists and assimilationists were the minor groups whereas the

pragmatists/accommodationists, as a mentality that sought the maximization of the benefits of staying as a part of the Empire, was the largest although different individuals in this group might have not agreed on what they should have demanded. This group of people did claim that the Armenians constituted a separate nation and had strong feelings of belonging to a particular religious-cultural group. However, the existence of such national consciousness does not mean that the demands based on it would always be maximalist, i.e. a sovereign separate state.

They were completely aware that citizenship brings some responsibilities besides rights. Military service undoubtedly was the most critical of these duties which became compulsory also for non-Muslims in 1909. The Armenians, like the majority of the other non-Muslim, greeted this development with a great joy and enthusiasm since they thought that being eligible for military service was an indicator of their acceptance as equal citizens with the Muslims. Moreover, they saw military service not only as a duty but also as an honor. This approach was not peculiar to any specific segment of the community but there was a general consensus about it. Even, they organized rallies participated by the thousands of people in Anatolian cities to demand the extension of the military service to the non-Muslims. Intellectuals and communal opinion leaders, both clerics and civilians, were especially eager in supporting the extension of military service to non-Muslims and encouraged the youth to join the army through articles and sermons. One can come across, for example, extremely militaristic pieces written by some Armenian clerics. They often gave examples from Armenian historical figures famous for their military success, though their numbers are not large, to prove that Armenians were not only inherently artisans or merchant but also apt soldiers. Thus, ideologically and discursively they had no problem with the military service in the Ottoman Empire.

On the other hand, some Armenians, especially the eligible youth and their families, had some hesitations and fears related to the practical side of the military service. They were worrying of what they would see in the army, in the barracks, how their Muslim fellow soldiers would meet them, whether they would face any repression to convert to Islam, how the physical and hygienic conditions would be. Such questions inhibited their willingness at a certain extent. The lack of collective experience and memory about the military service was a factor exacerbating their fear. One can find some publications in Armenian that gave information about the life in barracks and the positive relations between Muslim and Christian soldiers in order to help the youth in overcoming their fear. Yet those who could not overcome their fears and those who did not want to endure the difficulties of the service did not show up in the lots; or some Armenians, usually wealthy classes, tried to save their sons through some deceitful ways. What is interesting is that in some instances these people were reported by other Armenians. Despite all, the numbers show that they usually obeyed the call of the army.

Shortly, the Armenians as a community did not oppose the idea of being soldiers in the Ottoman army. However, they thought that the army had serious problems and needed fundamental reformation to solve these problems. They claimed that duration of military service was ambiguous and arbitrary, the pay was too low, the aptitudes of soldiers were not considered in any way, and the recruitment was done regardless of seasonal, agricultural works. Also, religious authorities, since they worried that Christian soldiers might have been converted by force, proposed to collect them in separate regiments which was not accepted by the state. Another proposal coming from some Armenians was to let the youngsters to perform their service in their hometown or its vicinity. This was not accepted either.

## External Relations: Other Communities

Citizenship and military service are two aspects of the relations with the state. However, another important facet was the relations with the other communities such as Turks, Kurds, and Caucasian immigrants. After the Revolution everybody discursively supported the principles of equality, fraternity (besides liberty and justice). The representatives of each community were present in any official ceremony or celebration and everybody was very careful in following the rules of protocol to be respectful to the collective identity of each community. However, excited speeches and polite protocols were not enough to eliminate the deep mutual distrust between Muslims and Armenians/Christians. On the surface there was fraternity as a discourse but real and burning social problems between groups were still existed. Social peace and harmony among confessional groups were extremely fragile due to age old problems. After the Revolution while, on the one hand, everybody was speaking about fraternity and harmony, communities were still suspicious that they would be subject of massacres at the hand of others. Every single minor social tension continued to have the risk of becoming ethnic turmoil even pogrom as was seen in Adana in April 1909. Communities were more than ready to believe the rumors about the aggressive behavior of “rival” communities.

One of the biggest, maybe the first one, of the problems that “poisoned” the relations between the Armenians and neighboring communities was the lands extorted from the Armenians. Although the problem of extorted lands emerged in the nineteenth century after the Revolution still there was no solution for it. The Armenian Patriarchate and the commissions established by it prepared and presented



many reports describing the problem and listing the invaded land but for no avail. After the Revolution Turkish parties including the CUP promised the Armenians to solve this problem but because of either unwillingness or incompetence they did almost nothing. It must be added that it was very difficult to overcome the resistance of local notables in this matter. Eventually, this matter remained to be a continuous source of tension among the communities. Some of the cases of disputed lands had been transferred from one generation to the other. Moreover, very frequently blood was spilled in these cases which understandably increase the enmity among different confessional groups. In the conflicts emerged because of land the religious identity of the weaker party could often become an easy target. One can observe that those who invaded the land belonging to the Armenians or commit any other extortion on them did also frequently insult “the Armenian religion”.

These land problems and other security problems such as murder, robbery, rape against the Armenians and the fact that perpetrators went unpunished made the Armenians thought that there was a systematic action to repress them. This way of thinking made them more sensitive toward the actions of the state and neighbor communities. They also thought about these neighbor communities, tried to describe them and the relations they had with them. They often stated that they had to continue to live side by side with these communities; but the communities did not know each other well enough. Thus, they said, the Armenians should have shown more effort to know other communities. For example, some provincial Armenian newspapers published some series of articles about the history and culture of the neighboring communities such as the Kurds, Turks, Yezidis. These thought were valid not only for indigenous groups but also for the Caucasian and Balkan Muslim

immigrants. They were welcome as long as they lived in harmony with the rule of law and other necessities of the constitutional regime.

As for the Kurds, “What shall we do with the Kurds?” was a question discussed widely by the Armenians. They were “ignorant uncivilized” people who lived in feudalism in the eyes of some Armenians. However, according to the evaluations of some Armenians, the social situation in which the Kurds were living was detrimental not only for the Kurds themselves but also for the Armenians. In other words, they argued, as long as the Kurds lived in “dark barbaric ages” they would continue to kill the Armenians and plunder their property. Therefore, the Kurds should have been educated and introduced to the civilization. In this endeavor, they added, the Armenians should have taken an important role as teachers or guides. In fact, many Armenian intellectuals regarded the Armenian community as a culturally and socially more developed community compared to the Muslim communities due to its better education and closer contact with the Western civilization. Thus, they might have played the role of guide not only for the Kurds but for the whole country. There were also some Muslim intellectuals or authors, like Ahmed Sherif, who endorsed this view. Indeed, one can observe among the Muslims a general worry and even fear about the social and economic development of the Armenians (besides other non-Muslim communities). They felt threatened that at this rate the real power would be transferred to the Armenians/Christians and they would become dependent on them. The Armenians’ assertiveness in demanding their rights and their visibility and weight in social life indirectly exacerbate the fear and anger of the Muslims. On the other hand, the Armenians did not have the political power to compromise or struggle with these anger, enmity, and fear. One can detect many indicators of the political weakness. For example, because of the demographic

distribution of the Armenian population in the country and the election system it was very difficult for the Armenian parties or independent candidates to be elected by their own effort and without support of the Turkish parties. In other words, they had to seek election alliances with the Turkish parties. Similarly, the Armenian political figures, though very productive and progressive, were not able to conclude any political debate at the direction they wanted unless they found support from the Muslim politicians. Another indicator of political weakness was that it was almost always the Armenians who should have explained their ideas and position to others. They had to seek the dialogue and assure the Muslim circles that they did not have any “evil intention”. For example, some Armenian newspapers gave supplements in Ottoman Turkish and even Kurdish to explain their ideas to the Muslims whereas Muslim public opinion did not have such a concern. It was the Armenian side that should have and had to worry about the development of mutual understanding between communities and take the first step.

Well, here emerged a “deadly paradox” for the Armenians: relatively more developed middle class in economic and social terms but being deprived of political ability and power to match the development of middle class. This combination made them the target of neighboring people. Any other key factor in this pattern was that both the Armenians and Muslims saw each other as the exploiter grabbing their rights, and also both perceived the other as a threat to their well-being. Simply, this was the social situation that dragged the Armenians to their “final destination”.

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